Toward Effective Pastoral Mentoring

Third Edition

A tool to assist mentors and mentees as together they explore parish ministry.

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We welcome your comments. We are especially interested in any additional resources that you may have. Call us at 1.877.279.9994 X0837 (toll free) or e-mail us:

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Introduction

The mentoring program in the Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRCNA) is reflective of a larger movement in the educational, business, and church worlds. More than the current fad, mentoring recognizes a significant gap and need in our current milieu—a milieu characterized by values of individuality, independence and mobility. A classroom-to-cubicle approach to life has been found wanting on a number of levels, not the least of which is the growth and maturity of those entering into the demanding enterprise of ministry.

In 1982, synod mandated that all those entering ministry, as well as those reentering ministry after a separation, must be engaged in a mentoring relationship. This has been the standard—although a standard that has been unevenly met. In 2002, the CRCNA experienced a successful bid for a Lilly grant toward sustaining pastoral excellence. Enhancement of the mentoring program is a significant focus of the designated funds. Pastor-Church Relations (PCR) has been assigned primary responsibility for administering this program.

Key components to the newly energized mentoring program are engaged at various times and places in the movement from an under-graduate vocational discernment process to a seasoned expression of call in an established place of ministry. The following is a summary list of these components.

- Mentoring as part of the *Facing Your Future* program involving high school students.
- College level mentoring.
- A mentoring program at Calvin Theological Seminary that is integrated into the curriculum; especially in the readiness for ministry facet.
- A synodically mandated mentoring program for newly ordained pastors in their first five years after ordination.
- Annual continuing education conferences provided for pastors in the first five years after ordination.
- A clarified role for regional pastors in the setting up and monitoring of mentoring relationships.
- The ongoing support of PCR in the administration of the mentoring program.

The program described in this manual is intended to effectively serve pastors and the church in the area of *sustaining pastoral excellence*. As with all ministry initiatives, these materials are to be considered as being dynamic rather than as being static. Enhancements and improvements will be made as experience is gained. May our providing God use this to his purposes and for his glory!

This manual was created by the staff of the Office of Pastor-Church Relations – CRCNA.

Rationale and Philosophy

There remains little argument that preparation for the Christian ministry cannot be completed solely in the academic context of a theological seminary. A pervasively understood reality is that, especially in the contemporary context of ministry, practitioners need to develop the capacity for ongoing learning and creative adaptation to a changing world of church and community**.** *The theological foundation and capacity for critical thinking fostered in the seminary community must be supplemented with ongoing opportunity for learning and reflection.* Mentoring does not presuppose a new understanding of ministry. Rather, it recognizes and develops what has been known for centuries.

> In the *Odyssey*, Homer tells the story of Ulysses leaving home to fight in the Trojan War. Before leaving he entrusted his son Telemachus to the care of a tutor whose name was Mentor. Mentor had the responsibility of nurturing this young man into mature adulthood. Mentor was a gift to Ulysses' son—a temporary surrogate for a distant parent. And Mentor brought a gift to Telemachus—wisdom and learning. Mentor was the key player in the dance of a learning-teaching relationship—a relationship we can learn from today. [1]

Additionally, there is a significant body of written material, generated in the last twenty years, that calls attention to the hazards of Christian ministry and the failures of many who undertake such a calling. One chronic factor in many of these situations is a default development in the lives of pastors of an experience of isolation. From the colleague and teacher-rich environment of seminary to the colleague-poor realities of pastoral ministry, first-term pastors find that personal and professional isolation is the common cold of pastoral ministry. Pastors who do well are those who recognize the issue and proactively respond early in their postseminary contexts.

Mentoring in the CRCNA is a strategy and program that addresses these two concerns. First, it provides a solid impetus toward a pattern of life-long learning for pastors. Second, it offers an out-of-the-gate pattern that encourages a relationship with a seasoned ministry practitioner who can provide a colleague-teacher presence at a time when it is most needed. Additionally, it provides the accountability needed to ensure that these health-bringing patterns are not deferred until a so-called more convenient time.

The mentoring model is an action-reflection model. Whereas the primary model in seminary is that of first reflecting and then doing, the primary model in mentoring is doing and then reflecting. It is a model that is learner (mentee) driven in which the circumstances of ministry and the pastors' responses provide the agenda for conversations with the mentor. Although there is an overall expectation as to what the mentee will address with the mentor, the sequence of that content is decided by the mentee.

[1] Walter C. Wright Jr., *The Gift of Mentors* (Pasadena, Cailf., DePree Leadership Center, 2001), 1.

Finally, this mentoring program is dynamic in its development. Every mentoring relationship is unique, and the feedback of those involved will become the material from which enhancements are developed. In that way, the entire mentoring program is an action-reflection model. May the Spirit of God be actively working in the use and development of this tool for pastors and for the church.

Mentor Training

People who are asked to be a mentor are faced with a unique opportunity. The opportunity lies in the potential relationship that is inherent when two individuals committed to like goals and similar professions meet regularly for interaction. Personal and professional growth are likely outcomes. This is noteworthy in an age when relationships are eroded by the fast-paced, mobile character of the culture in which we live.

The challenge of being a mentor is shaped by a variety of factors, not the least of which is the reality that many would-be mentors have not had mentors and the learning that comes with it.

Given this reality, a strategy for mentor training is being developed in the CRCNA with the following components:

- A manual that provides various guidelines and helps—the one you are reading.
- A primary text, *The Leader's Journey,* by Herrington, Creech and Taylor.
- A list of resources that can provide mentors with help in specific aspects of mentoring.
- Consultation and support from the regional pastor and the staff of PCR.

Getting Started

Ordination
In its current form, the mentoring program is designed for people being ordained into the ministry of the Word and Sacrament in the CRCNA. It assumes that an intensive and extensive theological education has preceded this ordination and that participants are covenanting with the CRCNA branch of the holy catholic church. The privileges and expectations of this mentoring program are appropriate only for those who enter this covenant. The CRCNA commits to this reciprocal relationship within the boundaries of this covenant. This relationship is intended to enhance the ministry of the church of Jesus Christ for the blessing of the world God loves.

The First Call
How you begin your ministry can profoundly affect how you fare along the way. Perspectives, habits, style, and experiences in your first charge have profound power to shape and set direction for the years to come. Discerning God's leading into a place where opportunities and challenges match gifts and passions is a crucial aspect of beginning ordained ministry in a manner that holds promise for the future. The mentoring program is designed to strengthen the possibility that good beginnings will lead to a lifetime of fruitful service and to sustained excellence in pastoral ministry.

Regional Pastors Play a Strategic Role
The CRCNA is a geographically and culturally diverse family of congregations. Every locale and every congregation has its own unique context and story. Regional pastors, those seasoned pastors who agree to walk alongside other pastors in their regions, are an important component in the mentoring program. Regional pastors localize the denominational program.

Their first role involves assisting a new pastor in selecting possible mentors from those who are geographically available and gifted for mentoring. Usually, this will be another ordained pastor in the CRCNA, but there may be situations in which it is wise to select a mentor from another denomination or church. Logistics and fit will be key factors in this selection process.

Pastor-Church Relations Supports the Process
The regional pastor will then recommend the selected mentor to Pastor-Church Relations (PCR). PCR will, in consultation with the Ministerial Information Advisory Committee, approve the selected mentor or ask that another selection be made. The regional pastor will then, in consultation with PCR, support the mentoring relationship and provide input as requested or needed. This may also involve brokering a new mentoring relationship when this seems most beneficial to the person being mentored.

Mentors – Obligations and Opportunities
Serving as a mentor to a less-experienced pastor is a high calling and a rich opportunity. It is a way to bless the church by assisting and supporting others in a way that strengthens the church and multiplies the ministry. No one should accept this responsibility without a sense that he/she has been called to do it. Although primary responsibility for initiation

lies with the mentee, the mentor's availability and willingness to enter a covenantal relationship is a necessary prerequisite for an effective experience.

Mentors will give of their time, emotional energy, and experience. They will also gain much in terms of learning from another, processing their own ministry experiences, and gaining in collegial support. Many mentoring relationships result in life-long friendships and encouragement.

Tending the Relationship

There may be no more critical a factor in the mentoring program than the quality of the relationship between the mentor and the mentee. All the other components of the program depend upon this key component. The quality of this relationship must be assessed and addressed by the mentor, the mentee, and the regional pastor.

Key Early Tasks

Affirm the fit
It is possible that anticipated chemistry in the relationship does not happen. The initial mentoring relationship should be terminated for a new one if after a few meetings it becomes apparent to any of the parties involved that this mentoring relationship will not provide what is needed in terms of a productive relationship.

Clarify expectations
Within the first few meetings, the expectations of those involved need to be clarified. This pertains to such things as:

- Place and frequency of meetings.
- Selection of topics for discussion.
- Occasional participation of spouses.
- Utilization of other ad hoc mentors.
- Occasional group mentoring options.

Make necessary adjustments
Throughout the mentoring process, adjustments will be required. This may pertain to schedule or place of meeting. It may mean the introduction of something new. It may mean that the mentee asks the mentor to do less advising and more clarifying of thoughts or feelings. The point is that the relationship will plateau or atrophy if adjustments are not made. You are encouraged to develop patterns and to tweak those patterns for an effective mentoring process.

Likely Patterns
There are two patterns to be aware of. Obviously, these are only patterns and not road maps relative to your mentoring relationship:

Relationship Development
In most mentoring relationships, there is a movement from a teacher-learner or coach-player sort of relationship to one of collegiality. Often the mentor-mentee relationship develops into a collegial relationship in which there is mutual learning from one another's wisdom.

Topic Development

In his doctoral thesis on mentoring, Robert DeVries notes a frequent progression among pastors in their first charges. He defines this as three areas of concern or thought:

- The first area of concern has to do with **skills and tasks of ministry**.
- The second area pertains to **pastoral identity**. What does it mean for you as a person now that you are a pastor?
- The third area that often emerges is that of **theological reflection**.
    - What is the nature of church?
    - How do I understand ministry?
    - What is the central theme of this project?

The mentoring modules are loosely ordered around these movements in the first parish of ministry.

Mentoring Modules

Why Modules?
In many ways, pastoral ministry is a multidimensional, interdependent, and ever-changing enterprise that defies compartmentalization. In fact, compartmentalization can be an unhealthy response to the challenges of ministry and the personal and spiritual development of the pastor.

With this caveat in mind, we acknowledge that meaningful conversation about ministry requires focus. The mentoring modules are tools to focus the conversation of the mentor and mentee. They are intended to assist in the development of meaningful conversation and, possibly, to expose an overlooked or avoided dimension of ministry.

How Do We Approach Them?
We envision that prior to a meeting between the mentor and mentee, the mentee will suggest a topic of discussion. However, there may be times when the mentor suggests the topic. Over the course of the relationship, all of the module topics will be discussed. There may also be a topic not in the manual that either the mentor or mentee could suggest for discussion.

When a topic is chosen for an upcoming session, both the mentor and mentee will do some prethinking and possibly, some prereading relative to the subject matter. The suggested resources found at the end of each module can be used, or additional resources may be selected.

Both the mentor and mentee are asked to record the primary subject matter of each conversation in a sentence or two. By mutual agreement, they will determine that the module has been sufficiently discussed. The mentee will include this information in the required annual report to the Pastor-Church Relations Office.

Upon occasion, the mentor and mentee may agree that a specific module could best be handled by an ad hoc mentor. For example, there may be a pastor in the area who is particularly adept at considering "congregational culture." The mentor and mentee are encouraged to utilize such resources with the understanding that the primary mentoring relationship remains integral to the effectiveness of this program.

From Seminary to Parish – What Is Different?

Pastors are well acquainted with two environments that are seemingly intimately related to each other—the seminary and the parish. Although closely related, they are amazingly different. When an individual shifts from the seminary to the parish, profound differences will be noticed. Those who struggled in seminary can, at times, thrive in the parish; those who thrived in seminary can struggle in the parish.

Consider the following eight transitions. In what way are you experiencing and responding to these identified shifts?

1. From a peer-rich environment to a peer-starved environment.

   "Friendship with church members can be complicated."

2. From an arena of defined and prescribed expectations to an arena of fuzzy expectations.

   "Where do I find my assignments?"

3. From an arena of education directed by others to an arena of education directed by you.

   "How will I be tested?"

4. From a reflect-then-do model to do-then-reflect model

   "Pastor, my son just moved in with his girlfriend, what do I do?"

5. From a what-says-the-Lord? to a thus-says-the-Lord! place.

   "You're the pastor; you tell us!"

6. From a level playing field for singles and marrieds to an uneven playing field for singles and marrieds.

   Singles – From one among many to a sense that some in the congregation view you as their project.

   Marrieds – From being seen as an individual to being seen as someone's spouse.

7. From an intellectualized environment to an interpersonalized environment.

   "He's smart but how is he with people?"

8. From self-care as important to self-care as a primary task.

   "If the cabin loses oxygen, first put on the mask on yourself, and then assist those around you."

Pastors who take note of these shifts and adapt to them will effectively make the transition from seminary to parish.

Resources:

Esau, John. "Ten Things I Didn't Learn in Seminary." *Christian Century* (February 2003), 12. (See appendix C – p. 86.)

Beginning

How pastors begin in a ministry setting can have a significant impact on ministry in their first church as well as in subsequent ministry. The beginning *process, however, can be adjusted as the result of reflection and dialogue concerning the issues*.

For this discussion, *beginning* includes everything that has gone into developing a relationship between you and the congregation; from the initial phone call or e-mail to the letter of call; from the first visit to hanging pictures in the house. All parties in the relationship have been watching, listening, and processing a plethora of impressions and thoughts. Very early there is value in considering the current state of the *beginning* process.

Reflections on Relationship Development
The calling process.
- What was helpful?
- What was not helpful?
- Was there anything you are really thankful for?
- Were there any regrets?

Reflections on Cultural Anthropology
Describe the culture of this congregation.
- How they communicate.
- How they influence.
- How they deal with differences.
- How resilience manifests itself.
- How anxiety expresses itself.
- How change is managed.

Reflect on your responses to this culture.
- Personal affinity – how the culture feels comfortable.
- Personal dissonance – how the culture "pushes your buttons."
- Key historical considerations.

Relationship Development So Far
- Who is pursuing a relationship with you? Your reactions? Your thoughts?
- How is the spousal relationship process going?
- What relationships outside of the congregation have you been maintaining? Talk about why these might be important.

Establishing Patterns
- Ways in which you are fitting in.
- Ways in which you are defining yourself as different from the cultural norm.
- How you are feeling about this so far.
- Personal adjustments needed.

Resources:

Ammerman, Nancy. *Studying Congregations.* Nashville.: Abingdon Press, 1998.

Farris, Lawrence. *Ten Commandments for Pastors New to a Congregation.* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003.

Friedman, Edwin H. *Generation to Generation.* New York: Guilford, 1985. (Particularly see the chapter 10.)

Spiritual Disciplines

"Should the cabin lose pressure, oxygen masks will drop from the ceiling . . . if traveling with a small child, put the mask on yourself first and then assist the child." Preflight passenger instructions recognize that self-care and self-nurture must precede the care of others. This is also true in the realm of spiritual leadership and pastoral longevity. This module is intended to create a context in which your spiritual disciplines can be helpfully discussed.

For Discussion:

- Describe your life of prayer—Richard Foster describes it as "our heart's true home."
    - How is that true for you?
    - How is it different than that?

- Talk about your current practices relative to spiritual disciplines.
    - How are they effective?
    - What would you like to try?

- In what ways does your preaching and leadership in public worship flow from your private practices of study and worship?
- In what ways do you experience tension with these two aspects of your life?

- Using the Lord's Prayer as your guide:
    - What do you tend to emphasize?
    - What do you tend to neglect?
    - What Scriptures inform your life of prayer; your other disciplines?

Resources:

Foster, Richard. *Prayer, Finding the Heart's True Home*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1992.

Herrington, James. *The Leader's Journey*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2003.

Hybels, Bill. *Who You Are When No One's Looking*. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1987.

Job, Rueben P. and Norman Shawchuk. *A Guide to Prayer.* Nashville: The Upper Room, 1983.

Ortberg, John. *The Life You've Always Wanted*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002.

Willard, Dallas. *In Search of Guidance*. Ventura, Calif.: Regal Books, 1983.

_____. *The Divine Conspiracy*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1998.

_____. *The Spirit of the Disciplines*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1998.

Sabbath Keeping

"Come to me all you who are weary or burdened and I will give you rest." Matt 11:29

For God's people, the rhythm of the good life has included the keeping of Sabbath. For the Old Testament faithful this meant that the seventh day of the week would be a day of rest in which the foundation and fabric of a God-ordered life would be enjoyed, celebrated, and reinforced.

With the advent of Jesus the old order was partially fulfilled in Christ giving a new emphasis and a new focus. Sabbath would now be found primarily in a person and a life developed in relationship to this person. Jesus has first place. Shifting the day-a-week rhythm to Sunday, the day of the resurrection, marked the early church's understanding of the fundamental way in which Jesus provides rest . . . rest from worry, rest from meaningless work, rest from a way of life held hostage by the fear of death. Jesus challenged the rules and regulations of the former Sabbath keeping and replaced it with a gracious invitation to dedicate time and energy to this foundational and transforming relationship of life.

North American Christians can seem confused about Sabbath keeping. On the one hand, the day-a-week rhythm is recognized and maintained. On the other hand, legalistic "Sunday observance" is losing its place. What's left can be a hybrid practice that straddles between rules and regulations on the one hand and relationship and celebration on the other.

For pastors, this shifting terrain creates both a challenge and an opportunity. The challenge comes from the fact that the one day set aside for rest is often the most demanding of work days. In our culture, no other day has the status of Sunday. On the other hand, there is a growing awareness of the need for rest. Pastors and their families are being challenged to keep Sabbath and to do it both creatively and faithfully—to set aside time, to establish patterns that provide both rest and reveling in the fundamental relationship of life—the relationship with God through Christ.

There are some who believe that Sabbath keeping is a sorely neglected practice for clergy today and that it is a foundational aspect of life, in fact it is one of the ten commandments now fulfilled and transformed in Christ.

For Discussion

- What do you believe about Sabbath keeping?
- How do your practices reflect your beliefs?
- In what ways do people in your church community share your perspective and practice?
- In what ways is this not the case?
- To what extent have you applied creative energy to Sabbath keeping?

Resources:

Dawn, Marva. *Keeping the Sabbath Wholly.* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989.

Nurturing Kingdom Passion

The decision to enter pastoral ministry arises out of a variety of experiences and motivations. A healthy call to ministry includes a vision of the kingdom of heaven and a lively passion that flows from this vision. But, one's passion for the kingdom of heaven and for a ministry that arises from this vision can erode and atrophy along the sometimes-relentless path of parish life. As Eugene Peterson captures it, pastors can become religious shopkeepers who effectively abandon their calling, their vocation, and even their "first love."

Urban Holmes III, quoted in *A Guide to Prayer*, writes:

> The besetting sin of the desert fathers was acedia or *accidie*, tellingly described as "the devil of the noonday sun." Acedia is a spiritual boredom, an indifference to matters of religion, or simple laziness. Symeon the New Theologian wrote to his monks, "Do not forget your special tasks and your handicraft to walk about aimlessly and in dissipation and so expose yourselves to the demon of accidie." His remark is almost a commentary on the axiom, "Idle hands are the devil's workshop."
>
> The ancient sin of acedia lies at the root of the pastor's or priest's refusal to heed the calling to be the instrument of spiritual growth. In 1977 Carlyle Marney, a distinguished Baptist "pastor to pastors," spoke at the seminary where I serve. I remember him asking our students if they thought after ten years they would still love the Lord Jesus or if instead would have become "hand tamped by the gentry." Of course, he would have been exceedingly surprised if any had confessed that probably the latter would be the case, but the fact is that many ordained persons quickly lose a sense of the excitement of the spiritual quest. They succumb to acedia in those forms that are to a degree peculiar to our times, and yet share much with previous centuries of clergy.
>
> Many of us when we think of the sins of the clergy recall the "fallen priest" in literature, such as the Reverend T. Lawrence Shannon in Tennessee Williams play, *The Night of the Iguana*. He was a boozer, a wencher, and had lost his faith. Yet, such a person is less a sinner than a casualty. American religion is obsessed with the "warm sins" such as illicit sex and gluttony. Because many of us are Donatists—believing that the validity of the sacrament depends upon the moral character of its minister, which was condemned as a heresy long ago—we become inordinately concerned when the warm sins are committed by the ordained. What we fail to realize is that pastor or priest who succumbs to the sins of passion is fallen, in the same manner as a fallen soldier. These are the demons that threaten anyone who sets out upon the path through chaos. Some will lose.

> The sins that should concern us far more deeply are those that prevent the ordained from ever exercising their spiritual vocation. These "cold sins" truly violate the mission of the pastor to be a symbol, symbol-bearer, and hermeneut. They arise not from an excess of passion, but from a fear of passion. They are the product of a calculated apathy, sustained only by the embers of a dying soul.
>
> Acedia is the root sin of the clergy as spiritual guides. Like a cancer it eats away at our abandonment to the love for God and his creation. It takes a number of forms, which have much in common with those of other centuries, but also have their own peculiar twist in our times.[2]

Presenting symptoms for this pastoral malaise arise in various forms. Preaching ruts, low grade depression, and a loss of joy provide a sampling. The reality is that effective pastoral ministry requires sustaining a kingdom vision—a way of seeing life, the world, and the congregation as connected to what God has done and continues to do. The pastor's heart needs to resonate at some level with the rhythms of heaven, but what will invigorate and sustain this passion?

For Discussion:

- How would you describe your current passion for the kingdom of heaven? What has happened to this passion in the last five years?
- In the past, what has stimulated your vision of the kingdom of heaven?
- What is currently expanding and supporting that vision, or how are you stewarding your imagination?
- How would those who know you well describe that which you are passionate about?
- What in your current life tends to dull or weaken the clarity and energy of your kingdom passions? What are you doing about these dynamics? What could you do?

Resources:

Job, Rueben P. *A Guide to Prayer for Ministers and Other Servants.* Nashville: The Upper Room, 1983.

Peterson, Eugene. *Five Smooth Stones.* Atlanta: J. Knox Press, 1980.

_____. *Subversive Spirituality.* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997.

_____. *Under the Unpredictable Plant.* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992.

_____. *Working the Angles.* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993.

[2] Job, Rueben P, *A Guide to Prayer for Ministers and Other Servants* (Nashville: The Upper Room, 1983), 63.

Character Formation

The development of Christian character is a lifelong process for any disciple of Christ. To have the mind, attitudes, and reflexes of Christ is a necessary aspiration for all who call him, "Lord". This is nowhere more obvious than in the Christian vocation of professional ministry. Yet, the history of the Christian church is replete with examples of persons in public ministry whose character was marked by chronic and destructive flaws. This does much to dishonor the name of Christ and damage the witness of the church.

The continual pursuit of Christian character is an essential dimension of Christian ministry, but, in the pursuit of many lesser goals, it can be sorely neglected. It is integrally related to every aspect of life and ministry and requires both commitment and intentional effort.

For Discussion:

- What are some ways you are able to gauge the growth and strengthening of your Christ-like character?

- How do you understand the relationship of God's work and your effort in the process of sanctification? How does that understanding translate into your behavior?

In recent years there has been an emphasis on accountability and developing accountability relationships. Many have indicated that they value of having a small accountability group with which they meet regularly. On the other hand, at a recent conference, Rev. Peter Scazzero said that "95 percent of pastors having affairs are in accountability groups."

- With whom are you willing and able to be transparent?
- To whom do you confess your sins?
- What are some ways you use to remain hidden?
- What are some of your other thoughts relative to the development of Christian character?

Resources:

Scazzero, Peter. *The Emotionally Healthy Church*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003.

Willard, Dallas. *Divine Conspiracy.* San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1998.

Leading with Your Strengths

When God called Moses to lead Israel out of Egypt, he provided Aaron as a source of support. Moses had many skills, but he was well aware of his limitations. Moses knew he needed help, and he accepted that assistance. In ministry, a pastor sometimes feels as if he or she must excel in every skill or type of task—but no one can be that well-rounded. Having unrealistic expectations about skills and strengths can cause a pastor to direct too much energy to areas of deficiency rather than building on areas of strength. How can we address this dilemma?

For Discussion:

- What are your individual strengths? Would others around you identify the same strengths?
- Which of your ministry tasks do you find easy? Do you do enough of these "easy" tasks?
- Which of your ministry tasks do you find difficult? Do these tasks take up enough, too little or too much of your time and energy?
- When it comes to difficult or challenging tasks, how are you approach them?
- How can you organize your work so that you complete these more challenging tasks (at least those that cannot be delegated) while being able to spend a significant amount of time and energy at tasks that are better suited to your strengths?

Resources:

Buckingham, Marcus & Curt Coffman. *First, Break All the Rules*. New York, N.Y.: Simon & Schuster, 1999.

Buckingham, Marcus & Donald O. Clifton. *Now, Discover Your Strengths*. New York, N.Y.: Simon & Schuster, 2001.

Ministry Firsts

In the normal life of the congregation there are a number of events and practices that become routine and familiar. It should be noted, however, that what seems to be routine from a participant's position can be experienced quite differently from a leadership position.

The Sacraments

1. Baptism
The *who* and *why* questions have often dominated our thinking about baptism. The first time a pastor baptizes an infant or adult, the pastor is faced with a cluster of questions that may not have previously crossed their mind. Questions may arise around issues such as:

- What should be said before, during, and after a baptism?
- Are there glitches that need to be anticipated?
- What about god-parents?
- How do I include a nonprofessing spouse?

2. Lord's Supper
Participating in the Lord's Supper and leading it are two different things. There are a surprising number of decisions that precede this sacrament, many of which are made by the presiding pastor. Some things to talk about are:

- What is the relationship between tradition and innovation?
- Who serves the elements?
- What about monitoring participation?
- What is the significance of the way in which the elements are distributed?

Public Ad Hoc Ministry Occasions

1. Funeral
Pastors can tell you about their first funeral or about the funeral that "threw them" because of the pastoral challenges surrounding it. They can also tell you that funerals are some of the richest times of ministry. Leading that first funeral service takes significant personal preparation. Some of the issues worth considering are:

- What is expected in this situation? What is needed? Is there tension between the expected and the needed?
- What is my relationship to the deceased? To the family? How will that impact my leadership?
- How do I work with the funeral director? Is the director able to inform me about local customs concerning funerals?
- How do I deal with the intrafamily dynamics/tensions?
- What are helpful ways to approach the graveside service?

2. Wedding

Weddings can be the best of times or the worst of times. Many pastors have stories of both. Careful preparation is critical to supporting this significant passage in the lives of two people and the Christian community. Angles worth discussing are:

Premarital strategies – deciding whom to marry; counseling; responding to cohabitating partners

- Planning the service – role of the couple, the family, you
- Rehearsal – Who's in charge? (Many pastors find it helpful to graciously take charge following conversations with the couple.) How to include the assistance of a wedding planner.
- Local etiquette
- PREPARE/ENRICH

Resources:

PREPARE/ENRICH
www.aacc.net/index.html?http://www.aacc.net/Dist_Learning/Prepare/prepare.htm

Vander Zee, Leonard. *In Life and In Death*. Grand Rapids: CRC Publications, 1992.

Cultural Anthropology

Culture has to do with history, norms, traditions, and the way things happen within a particular group. Congregations develop a culture. Being aware of this culture can enhance the pastor's ministry and provide resources for encouragement and change. Being unaware of this culture can create a context in which they swing and miss with their sermons, their leadership, and their attempts at finding their way.

What observations are you able to make about the culture of the congregation in which you are serving? Ask:

- What does this congregation value?
- What is it proud of? Embarrassed by?
- How does information get shared? Formally? Informally?
- Was there a "golden age"? How is it described?
- Who are the "heroes" here?
- How is this congregation like/unlike the larger community in which it is located?
- What are the taboos here?
- How have changes taken place?

It is also valuable to consider one's reactions to the culture. Consider such questions as:

- How is this culture like/unlike the culture of my upbringing?
- What do I like/dislike about this kind of environment?
- In terms of culture, what have I done that has helped my being accepted and effective here? What has not helped?
- How can I engage and embrace this congregation and ministry while maintaining something of a research-type perspective?

Resources:

Ammerman, Nancy. *Studying Congregations.* Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998.

Farris, Lawrence. *Ten Commandments for Pastors New to a Congregation.* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003.

Ministry Feedback

"Those who failed to oppose me, who readily agreed with me, accepted all my views, and yielded easily to my opinions, were those who did me the most injury, and were my worst enemies, because, by surrendering to me so easily, they encouraged me to go too far . . . I was then too powerful for any man, except myself, to injure me."

Napoleon Bonaparte, Emperor of France

An important dimension to effective leadership is receiving and processing feedback from the congregation and council. The effectiveness of the leader will not exceed the clarity of, and wise response to, the reaction of the congregation and the council to his/her ministry. Feedback will consist of both informal and formal mechanisms.

Informal Mechanisms
Most of the feedback pastors receive in ministry is informal. It consists of an array of communications from the congregation that can include:

- Verbal compliments/criticisms.
- Questions/challenges.
- Body language.
- Change in the frequency or style of participation.
- Third-party explanations of someone else's attitudes or behavior.
- Written communications.

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The effective pastor will need to receive and interpret these communications in such a way that they are available for decision-making. Hazards with this area lie in missing these communications or being overly influenced by them. One way to talk about this dynamic is to describe the skin of the leader as Velcro (everything sticks), as Teflon (nothing sticks), or as Gore-Tex (the good stuff gets through; the less helpful does not).

Formal Mechanisms
If the pastor depends entirely upon informal feedback, the pastor is held captive by a personal interpretive grid—one that has been shaped and formed by many factors, not the least being his family of origin. Formal mechanisms help one to weigh wisely the informal feedback received in ministry. Effective formal feedback mechanisms are culturally sensitive, affirmed by the larger church world, and administered by wise and mature people. The following are some of the most effective formal feedback mechanisms:

- Well-conceived, routine performance evaluations—annually in the first three years, semiannually thereafter
- Formal pastor-parish relations committee (see appendix A – p.74)
- Informal conversations with congregational sages
- Guided self-assessments with a someone outside the congregation

For Discussion:

Consider the Velcro dimensions of the leader and strategies regarding formal and informal feedback.

- Content of the feedback.
- Source of the feedback.
- Why the feedback sticks.

Consider the Teflon dimensions of the leader and strategies regarding formal and informal feedback.

- The kind of feedback that might be missed.
- Strategies for discerning informal feedback.
- Effectiveness of the feedback.
- Sufficiency of the feedback.

Consider the Gore-Tex dimensions of the leader and strategies regarding formal and informal feedback.

- Regularly processing feedback of another professional.
- Systematic processes for receiving objective feedback.
- Spiritual and physical disciplines.
- Regular processes for receiving objective feedback.
- Regular processing of all feedback with a mental-health professional or seasoned colleague.

Resources:

Gilbert, Roberta. *Extraordinary Relationships*. Minneapolis: Chronimed, 1992.

Goleman, Daniel et al. *Primal Leadership*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2002. (Particularly see the chapters and appendix on emotional intelligence.)

Harrington, Jim. *The Leader's Journey*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2003. (Particularly see parts 2 and 3.)

Hudson, Jill M. *Evaluating Ministry.* Besthesda, Md.: Alban Institute, 1992.

The Pastoral Relations Committee. Grand Rapids: Pastor-Church Relations Services of the Christian Reformed Church in North America, 1995. (See appendix A – p. 74)

Time Management

Managing time is managing life. It is a whole life enterprise. It involves work and play, church and family, time for self and time for friends. How pastors manage their time reveals a great deal about their personality, their theology, and their sense of call.

No two people manage time in the same way. Personality, work style, situation, and history will impact our individual approach to time management. Whatever our style, the satisfaction of time well managed can be eroded by workaholic or slothful tendencies. Part of the challenge in pastoral ministry is that so much of one's time is unobserved by others. Excesses of work or nonwork can go unobserved for significant periods of time. Systems of accountability, such as regular office hours, are important for both the pastor and the congregation.

Reflection on Your Attitude Toward Time
In a class on spiritual disciplines, Dallas Willard encouraged participants to spend some time doing nothing. He wanted to challenge the incessant *doing* that characterizes so many of our lives; doing that *de facto* contradicts the grace foundation of life before God. An argument can be made that being good stewards of our time is rightly tackled from that grace foundation. Time can become our friend and an opportunity for worship, work, prayer, and play.

- What are your attitudes toward time?
- How were these attitudes shaped?
- To what extent do you embrace Sabbath-keeping? (See module on Sabbath keeping – p. 18)

Reflection on Your Practices Relative to Time
Describe your ideal week. Include personal, family, friends, and work time. Describe your current pattern. Think about the discrepancies.

- What would it take to move closer to the ideal? In terms of your beliefs? In terms of your habits?

Reflection on Desired Changes
Given your personality with its strong suits and propensities for excess:

- How can you celebrate and enjoy your God-given strengths?
- What correctives might need to be considered relative to the challenge of time management?
- What next step could you take in terms of time management?

Resources:

Allen, David. *Getting Things Done*. New York: Viking, 2001.

Dawn, Marva. *Keeping the Sabbath Wholly*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989.

Peterson, Eugene. *Working the Angles*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993.

Collegial Relationships

An underlying factor among pastors who struggle or self-destruct is isolation and loneliness. It is a seedbed for a variety of negative patterns. You are invited to consider ways in which collegial relationships can be developed.

Beliefs
Actions arise out of beliefs. What pastors believe about friendships, collegial relationships, and themselves will influence this aspect of their lives.

Gil Rendle of the Alban Institute warns pastors against seeking to meet their relationship needs within the congregations they are serving. Relationship needs are met in ministry, but Gil's warning pertains specifically to the development of relationships outside of the congregation in which pastors (and spouses) can let their hair down and be themselves.

For Discussion:

- What do you believe about this?
- What has contributed to your belief system about this dimension of life?
- What role have friends played in your life?
- How will you seek to have your friendship needs met?
- In what ways will you "get a life" outside of your work?
- If you are married, talk about how your spouse, and you as a couple, will develop relationships that are mutual and safe.

Resources:

Crabb, Larry. *Connecting.* Nashville: Word, 1997.

Olthuis, James. *The Beautiful Risk.* Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001.

Rendle, Gil. *The Multigenerational Congregation.* Bethesda, Md.: Alban Institute, 2002.

Intimacy

One helpful definition of intimacy is *shared privacy.* Intimacy involves a passing back and forth, a sharing of something important and meaningful. This sharing happens under a condition of privacy; an exclusiveness that prevents others from participating. Intimacy can happen in groups, but it most frequently happens between two people.

Intimacy can characterize a sharing of various dimensions of life. It can be the intellectual intimacy of two graduate students exploring the social lives of seventeenth century Finnish blacksmiths; or that of two church workers creating an innovative vacation Bible school. It can be the emotional intimacy of assembly line workers who talk of their personal lives and feelings to pass the time of day and to develop meaning in their work world. It can be the spiritual intimacy that develops when prayer partners share faith and doubt, hope and despair, love and distain. It can be an erotic intimacy when the sensual chemistry of sexuality is shared by a look, a comment, or a touch.

To be human is to want and need intimacy and to seek these interpersonal connections either intentionally or unintentionally. The observation can be made that intimacy in one dimension will usually create a context in which intimacy in another dimension is more readily accessible. For example, a husband and wife who have emotional intimacy can more easily gain the satisfactions that come from spiritual or sexual intimacy. In ministry, pastors have opportunities for intimacy at a number of levels; intellectual, emotional, spiritual, and sexual. Effective pastors develop the capacity for intimacy as well as internal and external boundaries that keep these intimacies from over-reaching and compromising relational integrity.

Pastors need to be aware of their own intimacy needs; especially those that are acute because of developmental gaps or current situations. On many levels, ministry is intimate work. Those unaware of, or unresponsive to, their own needs are vulnerable to boundary violations and to a compromising of their vocational effectiveness.

For Discussion:

- How do you understand intimacy? What beliefs do you have about it?
- How are you able to embrace/relish the intimate character of ministry?
- Where are your intimacy needs being met?
- Do you have unmet needs in this area?
- What are healthy internal boundaries?
- What are healthy external boundaries?

Resources:

Clouid, Dr. Henry, Dr. Jon Townsend. *Boundaries.* Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992.

Gilbert Roberta. *Extraordinary Relationships*. Minneapolis: Chronimed, 1992.

Nouwen, Henri. *The Wounded Healer*. New York: Doubleday, 1990.

Managing Technological Opportunity

In the last twenty years, a radical change has come in the area of technology. Personal computers, cell phones, DVD players, the internet and e-mail have created changes in the way we work, communicate and live. In a previous era, television ushered in major shifts in the way information was disseminated and how family life was ordered. Whether these changes contribute to the body of Christ and the kingdom of heaven or distort and destroy it is, in large measure, a result of how technology is managed. This module is intended to survey the field and suggest courses of conversation that could lead to a more mature stewardship of these resources.

Consider your own thinking and actions relative to some of the following opportunities.

Cell Phone

- How is the cell phone contributing to your life and ministry? How is it detracting?
- Have you familiarized yourself with the social etiquette and safety issues that come with cell phones? How are you practicing them?

Television/Video

- What place do TV and videos have in your life?
- Talk about the advantages and disadvantages of your current practices? Are there any changes you would like to make?

E-mail

- What are some of the ways in which e-mail can enhance your personal, family and ministry life?
- Are you familiar with the hazards? (For example, a person can impulsively or improperly send an e-mail and cause significant relationship problems.)
- Are you familiar with e-mail etiquette and the kinds of communication for which it is well suited?
- What other issues arise for you in regard to e-mail?

Internet

The opportunities for research on the internet seem infinite.

- Have you become familiar with some of these opportunities?

There are also dangers.

- wasting time
- plagiarism
- pornography
- neglect of other practices

<u>Wasting Time</u>

- How has the use of the internet positively or negatively affected your stewardship of time?

Plagiarism

Few of us have original thoughts or ideas. Most creative work is a combination of things learned from others.

- Think and talk about the ways in which you properly credit your sources without encumbering your communication.

Pornography

The incidence of internet pornography among pastors is disturbingly high.

- How do you deal with this possibility?
- Given the private nature of most internet use, what are some strategies you use to deal with this temptation?

Neglect of Reading and Contemplation

Like television, the internet can become a mind-numbing habit that erodes the healthy practices of reading and contemplation.

- Talk about how you are doing in this area.

Resources:

Brown, Lenora V. "Internet Pornography as an Expression of Sexual Addiction." *Update* (November 2000): 1-5. (See appendix E – p.88)

Oates, Wayne. *Nurturing Silence in a Noisy Heart.* Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1979.

Schultz, Quentin, *Habits of the High-Tech Heart.* Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002.

Stinnett, Chris. "Footnotes in the Pulpit." *Your Church* (January/February 2003), 8. (See appendix D - 87)

Knowing and Owning Your Story

John Calvin, in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, suggests that all knowledge consists of two parts—the knowledge of God and the knowledge of self. Knowledge of self is both a prerequisite for effective ministry and an odyssey within ministry. Knowing oneself means knowing both the *sunny* and *shadow* sides. It means a persistent quest to discover blind spots that inform one's ministry, whether or not one recognizes these different sides.

There are many ways to tell your story—ways that both reveal and conceal who you think you are and who you truly are. In this module you are encouraged to tell your story in such a way that it helps you further know your story.

For Discussion:

- Identify turning points in your life—points that marked change in the way you look at life or the world.
- Who are the key people in your life?
- Who do you admire?
- Who do you desire to please?
- Who do you distance yourself from?
- Which biblical characters are like you in some way? In what way?
- What has affected your spiritual formation?
- What is one thing you like about yourself? One thing you would like to change?
- To what extent do you understand your hurts and disappointments?

Resources:

Crabb, Larry. *Connecting.* Nashville: Word Pub., 1997.

Harrington, James. *The Leader's Journey.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2003.

Nouwen, Henri. *The Wounded Healer*. New York: Doubleday, 1990.

Smedes, Lewis. *Shame and Grace*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1993.

Leadership

Church literature is replete with discussions about leadership. The proliferation of writing does not eliminate confusion on the issue nor does it preclude the important personal and corporate thinking about faithful ways to lead or to think about leadership.

There is a theoretical and personal level on which leadership can be discussed. The pastor makes positive moves when grappling with some of the theoretical and philosophical issues and when recognizing his or her strengths and weaknesses relative to that growing understanding of effective leadership.

For Discussion:

Read the *Banner* article on leadership found in the appendices (p. 93). Contemplate the implications for ministry relative to this approach to leadership.

- What are the strengths and hazards of a heroic, pace-setting model?
- What are the strengths and hazards of a caring-friend model?
- What style do you most naturally gravitate toward?
- Who in your congregational community can help you? How?
- To what extent do you understand the concept of adaptive leadership?

Resources:

Sustaining Pastoral Excellence. *Effective Leadership in the Church*. Grand Rapids: Christian Reformed Church in North America, 2005.

Ott, Stephen. "Emotional Intelligence and Leadership." *Congregations* (Winter 2003), 20-21.

Smith, Kathleen. "Leading Through Change." *The Banner* (September, 2003), 38-39. (See appendix F – p.93)

Whitehead, Evelyn Eaton, and James D. Whitehead. *The Promise of Partnership.* 1991. Reprint, Lincoln, Neb.: iUniverse.com, Inc., 2000.

Pastors and Staff

Over the past thirty years, increasing numbers of churches are choosing to employ more than one paid staff member. Many view this change a natural development of congregational growth. However, congregational size alone does not entirely account for this change. Other factors also come into play including:

- Today's increased expectations for ministry programming.
- Growing numbers of families with two working parents.
- Fewer multigenerational families in a congregation.
- More targeted and decreased overall voluntarism.
- A realization that pastors cannot excel in every area.
- Increased generational culture gaps leading to a diversity of values and belief.

While serving in parish ministry as part of a staff team can have many advantages, it also brings challenges. The following factors may affect a pastor's ability to thrive in a team environment:

- Congregational culture.
- The pastor's skills, especially team-building, leadership, and supervisory skills.
- The skills of other members of the staff team.
- A church's administrative infrastructure. (Eg., existence of a competent personnel committee)
- A congregation's acceptance of additional staff and their roles.
- History of staffing within the congregation.

In a team-led ministry, pastors must be intentional about nurturing team cohesion. Knowing and understanding each other as staff is an important first step for effective teamwork. Effective communication is also important. Many staff teams find it helpful to participate in team-building exercises, especially those that help differentiate personality and work styles. In addition, clearly defining roles and responsibilities through a staff covenant and holding regular team meetings can also contribute to positive working relationships.

For Discussion:

- How does the "staff" question relate to you and your situation?
- If you applied the serenity prayer to your current staff situation, what would you put in each of the following categories:
    - What I feel I cannot change. (Eg., the situation, my gifts, other)
    - What I may be able to change. (Eg., the situation, structure, personnel, my role, my response)
        - Discuss how to know the difference between what can and cannot be changed. (Eg., what is shaping you perspective; who can provide a more objective perspective) How might you test making changes?

- What skills and gifts do you bring to a staff setting?
- How do you see yourself relating to other staff? Are you the administrator, the supervisor, the mentor, spiritual guide, friend, a combination of these? Is it okay to be different things to different people? What role do you gravitate toward?
- What is your role in the process of finding, hiring, supporting, evaluating, and possibly dismissing staff? What roles do you find most enjoyable/most stressful?
- What is in place to encourage you and your staff to get to know and understand each other?
- What steps can you take to help integrate new staff with existing staff?

Resources:

Cladis, George. *Leading the Team-Based Church*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1999.

deKoning, Neil. *Guiding the Faith Journey: A Map for Spiritual Leaders.* Grand Rapids: Faith Alive Christian Resources, 1996.

Holford, Trish. *Our Staff: Building Our Human Resources*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2002.

Laswon, Kevin E. *How to Thrive in Associate Staff Ministry*, Herndon, VA: Alban Institute, 2000.

McIntosh Gary L. *Staff Your Church for Growth – Building Team Ministry in the 21st Century*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 2000.

Westing, Harold J. *Church Staff Handbook: How to Build an Effective Ministry Team*. Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1997.

Congregational Change

The classic dilemma for pastors comes in the contradictory statement, "Pastor, we want you to lead us, but don't change anything!" An obvious over-simplification, but this confusing message does capture much of the challenge around pastors functioning as agents of change. The effective pastor has learned how to lead and bring change while maintaining a high level of clarity and trust in the congregation.

On the one hand, pastors who adopt a maintenance approach to ministry will be rightly faulted for not providing leadership, while on the other hand, pastors who initiate change can be criticized for railroading the church. One has a high level of leadership if one can lead change in a courageous, visionary, and pastoral manner. The hazards are many.

For Discussion:

- Will I be more likely to stumble around too-much-too-soon or don't-rock-the-boat sorts of excesses in ministry? What feedback have I received that validates this tendency?
- How do I perceive this congregation's attitude toward change? What is sacred and thus unchangeable? What are patterns that can easily be changed? How have I come to these conclusions? How can I discover this reality?
- How do I perceive, in terms of trust and capacity for my facilitating change, the congregation's possible response?

Resources

Harrington, Jim, Mike Bonem, and James H. Furr. *Leading Change in the Congregation.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2000.

Rendle, Gilbert R. *Leading Change in the Congregation.*1998. Reprint, Herndon, Va.: Alban Institute, 2001.

Seely, Edward D. "Defusing Fear of Innovations: Facilitating Change in the Church." *REC Focus* (September 2003), 40-61.

Responding to Multiple Generations

Inherent in ministry is the need to involve and serve people of different generations. This has always been the case. However, with today's fast pace of societal change, an age difference of just five to ten years can result in significant clashes of values, communication styles, hopes, and fears.

With members aged 9 months to 99 years, churches face a significant challenge when it comes to engaging members of many age groups. Multigenerational dynamics vary greatly from congregation to congregation, but no congregation is immune to the challenges of making their ministry relevant across all age groups and interests.

In churches with large numbers of immigrants, age differentials can be even more challenging for pastors. It is well known that the culture of a first generation immigrant is strikingly different from that of their North American born children and grandchildren. Not only does this present challenges for a church in creating unity around mission, vision and strategy, it also creates a weekly challenge for pastors who try to make their preaching relevant to members, both old and young.

Unfortunately, many pastors unintentionally gravitate toward one or two generations within the church. For example: their method of sermon construction, choice of examples, and style of delivery often appeals to a specific generation. Over time, other generations can begin to feel left out or ignored. To avoid the perception of favoring one generation over the other, some pastors find it helpful to develop specific strategies to ensure that people of many different generations are engaged in ministry programs and preaching.

For Discussion:

- Describe the generational demographics in your congregation and identify the generations.
- If you were to guess the "default" generation to whom you most often speak, which generation would that be? How do you come to that conclusion?
- Do you sense there may be generations in your church with whom you are less connected? Are there age groups that you find it difficult to reach? Why?
- What strategies could you develop to more intentionally recognize and respond to the diversity of generations within your congregation?
- What else have you learned about the diversity of perspective within the congregation you are serving?

Resources:

Bennis, Warren G. and Robert J. Thomas. *Geeks and Geezers: How Era, Values, and Defining Moments Shape Leaders*. Boston: Harvard Business SchoolPress, 2002.

Rendle, Gilbert R. *The Multigenerational Congregation: Meeting the Leadership Challenge***.** Herndon, Va.: Alban Institute, 2002.

Underwood, Chuck. *The Generational Imperative: Understanding Generational Differences in the Workplace, Marketplace and Living Room.* Cincinnati: The Generational Imperative, Inc., 2007.

Stress in Ministry

"The stress on leaders . . primarily has to do with the extent to which the leader has been caught in a responsible position for the relationship of two others . . two persons . . . (any two sides to an argument . . .)" [3] *Ed Friedman*

A chronic area of misunderstanding among pastors and church leaders relates to the causes of, and response to, stress in ministry. Frequently, conversations concerning stress in ministry focus on workload, job description, and the 24/7 nature of ministry. While these may play a part in the development of stress, they are not the primary precipitating factor.

The game of chess provides us with a vivid example of stress in ministry. As the game progresses, the players win or lose based on the position of the king in the arrangement of players. When a king is caught where any move will lead to his demise, it is a situation of checkmate. The player is stuck! The player is about the lose the game. The primary cause of stress in ministry is the way that pastors are thwarted in the arrangement of relationships.

To experience *checkmate* means that no matter which way the pastor moves he or she will lose something in the way of approval, support, or trust from key people in the congregation. In ministry, this is a major factor in developing stress. The following illustration may help clarify: If the pastor responds affirmatively to the innovators in worship and initiates changes that eclipse the forms and practices loved by others in the church, he or she will win and lose in terms of his or her relationships within the congregation. An additional factor is that the pastor will be seen as central to this congregational dynamic.

Self-differentiation, a term developed from family-systems theory, describes a pastor's ability to stand in the middle of this relationship maze and maintain his or her ability to think clearly, respond thoughtfully, and not get ensnared either by the criticism or by the adulation coming his or her way. Developing this quality is crucial to resilience in ministry.

Or again, a pastor experiences stress as he or she finds that their schedule and their spouses' schedule are chronically overlapping. Saying no to all Saturday night engagements limits their social life. Saying yes adds significant burdens to the Sunday morning responsibilities. Considerable conversation and negotiation may be required to deal with this experience.

Other factors can heighten the likelihood of this sort of stress. Sometimes the *church structure* itself is a contributing factor. For example, in congregations with a growing

[3] Edwin H. Friedman, *A Failure of Nerve: Leadership in the Age of the Quick Fix* (Bethesda, The Edwin Friedman Estate/Trust, 1999), 276.

staff, the lead pastor can become the conduit of communication between the council and the staff—in which case, the pastor is being asked to defend the council to the staff and the staff to the council.

Sometimes *poorly defined goals and objectives* create an environment wherein individuals or groups "corner" the pastor because they believe that the congregation and the pastor should be pursuing different and, sometimes, mutually exclusive directions. Thus, the pastor's stress level goes up.

For Discussion:

Talk about your opinions as to the accuracy of the above introductory paragraphs on stress in ministry.

- Do you agree? How? How not?
- Can you remember a time in your life when you felt that your relationship had reached *checkmate*? What was that like? How did you respond?
- What impact does the church structure have on your stress level? On the clarity of agreed upon goals and objectives?
- Talk about some ways to help your lay-leaders understand the causes of stress in ministry.

Resources:

Friedman, Edwin H. *A Failure of Nerve: Leadership in the Age of the Quick Fix*. Bethesda, Md.: The Edwin Friedman Estate, 1999.

_____. *Friedman's Fables*. New York: Guilford Press, 1990.

Conflict

"It's best to stay in touch with both sides of an issue. A person who fears God deals responsibly with all of reality, not just a piece of it." Ecclesiastes 7:18 The Message

A normal dimension to pastoral ministry is conflict. This can be constructive, helpful, and productivity. It can also be destructive, discouraging, and confusing. Few people enter ministry fully ready to respond to the conflicts that arise.

Conflict has the potential to provide breakthroughs in insight and behavior. Acts 15 provides an example of how an intense conflict became the context in which the Holy Spirit guided the church. Many of us, however, through a variety of experiences, have come to instinctively believe that conflict is *wrong* or *dangerous*. In this module, you are invited to explore some of the factors that may affect your response to the certain conflicts that will arise.

Theological Reflection on Conflict
Think about how conflict is viewed in the Bible.

- Is there a difference between the Old Testament and New Testament relative to perspectives on conflict?
- To what extent have you contemplated a biblical understanding of conflict?

Personal Reflection on Conflict
Early life experiences can have a profound affect on our attitudes about life. This is certainly the case relative to conflict.

- Think about how your family dealt with conflict when you were growing up. What did you like about this? What was not so helpful?
- How might this inform your future learning around the issue of conflict?
- What conflicts in your teen and adult years have you experienced?
- How do these conflicts continue to inform your reaction or response to conflict in the congregation?

Congregational Reflection on Conflict

- What do you perceive to be this congregation's attitude toward and response to conflict? What is healthy about that? What is not?
- How has their history affected their way of dealing with conflict?
- What can you do to help this congregation manage conflict as it arises?

For Discussion:

- Who can you develop relationships with that will help you in your capacity to deal with conflict?

Resources:

Blackburn, Richard. Conflict, *Transformation Skills for Churches*. Lombard, Ill.: Lombard Mennonite Peace Center, 2003.

Boers, Arthur Paul. *Never Call Them Jerks*. Bethesda, Md.: Alban Institute, 1999.

Leas, Speed. *Discover Your Conflict Management Style*. Washington, D.C.: Alban Institute, 1997.

Steinke, Peter. *How Your Church Family Works*. Washington, D.C.: Alban Institute, 1993.

Confidentiality

Who can I talk to about this?

In the context of ministry, pastors interact with many people and are told about personal and private concerns. The expectation of parishioners is that these conversations will be confidential, and that expectation is a legitimate one.

Confidentiality, however, can create some problems. While pastors are committed to confidentiality with individuals, they also work with a congregation, other family members, and a council. Keeping secrets can be a burden. A pastor must make judgment calls as to what can or should be communicated and what ought to remain confidential:

- With whom does the pastor consult concerning issues requiring the spiritual guidance of parishioners?
- With whom does a pastor consult regarding judgment calls?
- What if a person is being hurt by another's behavior?

There are many issues to consider when dealing with confidentiality. Here are some of them:

1. Confidentiality is a primary responsibility of the pastor in relationships. Any exceptions must be carefully weighed.
2. Be clear with the church council and the congregation about confidentiality and its limits.
3. Engage the services of a colleague or consultant outside the church community. This person should be a professional who is aware of the ethics of confidentiality but can assist in determining proper responses. This, by the way, is not breaking privilege but is an opportunity in a safe environment to sort out appropriate responses.
4. Do not consider your spouse a confidant in regard to confidential matters. Although your spouse will likely be aware of some confidential situations, it is wise to keep this to a minimum. When spouses become a primary confidant for the pastor, it can negatively affect their capacity for relationships with congregational members. Such sharing can also become a burden to the marriage as ministry increasingly is a focal point for the relationship.
5. Know the state and provincial laws regarding the *duty to inform*. This involves abuse and harm to self or others.
6. If you believe that it is necessary to inform family, fellow officebearers, or another professional, seek permission (preferably written) to disclose.

For Discussion:

- What challenges have you had with issues of confidentiality?
- Do you believe that ministry is unique from other professions in regard to privileged communication?
- How do you keep your spouse adequately informed without saying too much?

- Who in your community can serve as a safe consultant?

Resources:

Christian Reformed Church in North America. “Report of the Committee on Clergy Silence.” *Agenda for Synod, 1988,* 317-43.

Christian Reformed Church in North America. “Report of the Committee on Clergy Silence.” *Acts of Synod ,1988*. 534-37.

Christian Reformed Church in North America. *Church Order of the Christian Reformed Church*. Articles 65 and 82-84 with Supplements.

Transference and Counter-Transference

Webster's dictionary defines transference as "the redirection of feelings and desires—especially of those unconsciously retained from childhood toward a new object." Counter-transference occurs when the object of the original transference unconsciously reciprocates based on his or her own feelings or desires. Pastoral ministry is an arena in which this dynamic can easily happen.

There is a strong find-a-need-and-fill-it dynamic to pastoral ministry. Pastors are instinctively inclined toward meeting needs. In a profound way, the church is a place for *needy* people. Those without need are not attracted to the gospel or to churches in which the gospel is demonstrated and expressed. Pastors are those articulating the gospel and are the visual leaders of the church. As a result, they are frequently the objects of transference. Pastors, insufficiently aware of their own needs and gaps, are sitting ducks for counter-transference. For example, a spouse whose marriage is devoid of intimacy may be attracted to a clergyperson who, concurrently, is experiencing acute needs for affirmation. When the spouse approaches the pastor for pastoral care, the mutual "attractions," although not conscious, may create a magnetism that is neither healthy nor helpful.

The transference and/or counter-transference dance can occur in the context of worship, counseling, or other venues within the life of the church. This reality informs many other ministry dynamics such as the pastor's need for:

- Approval.
- Intimacy.
- Friendship.
- Collegial relationships.
- Self-awareness.
- Spiritual disciplines.
- Effective feedback and accountability.

The dynamic of transference and/or counter-transference is something that needs to be intellectually and emotionally understood. Pastoral intelligence will include a growing awareness of how this is affecting ministry relationships.

For Discussion:

Talk about your understanding of, and history with, this dynamic.

- What is or is not in place to help you with this possibility?
  (Eg., One helpful practice is the pastor's meeting with an experienced pastor or a mental health professional on a regular basis to discuss the pastor's more intensive work with parishioners.)
- In what area(s) can you check out your gut feelings about specific relationships in your ministry?

Resources:

Benner, David G. ed. *Baker Encyclopedia of Psychology.* Grand Rapids: Baker, 1985. (See page 1,173 – transference.)

Difficult People

A sidebar debate has been taking place for some time in the world of parish ministry. This debate has to do with the nearly universal experience that pastors have of dealing with difficult people within the congregation they serve. No matter how you view this reality there is value in considering the difficult people in the congregation you serve and conversing about this topic with a seasoned mentor.

Two authors are often associated with the debate, although it is doubtful that either is that stridently assertive about their approach. Lloyd Rediger maintains that within congregations there can be people potentially functioning as "clergy killers." He authored a book by that name, but indicated after its publication that the title was chosen by the publisher for marketing purposes and not a title he prefers. Nonetheless, the book describes individuals who, consciously or unconsciously, train their personal and interpersonal weapons on the pastor. On the other side of this somewhat contrived argument is Arthur Paul Boers, a non-violent systems theorist, who, in *Never Call Them Jerks,* argues that the labeling of difficult people in the congregation does not serve us well. Rather, when we label people we do ourselves a disservice and lose our capacity to see them as people as well as our ability to respond to them in a self differentiated way. We let them "push our buttons" leading us to automatic rather than chosen responses.

Perhaps Ed Friedman provides helpful passage through this dilemma and the frequent realities of the crazy-making situations in parish life. He pictures the clergy collar as "the screen on which people play their home movies." His perspective conveys that all parishioners have "home movies" (the working out of family issues) and that some of them are of the horror/terror genre. He also suggests that persons will often project these issues onto clergy—a dynamic that can seem as an overt or covert personal assault. The question then is whether or not the pastor is alert and thoughtful enough to choose how and when to allow these movies a vivid screening.

It should be noted that not all "difficult" people can be painted with the same brush. There are individuals whose current life circumstances are so difficult and perplexing as to challenge the healthiest of individuals. Their acute behavior is not then indicative of a chronic condition. There are others who struggle with mental illness and whose reactions are skewed by their internal processors. For example, a person challenged with "borderline personality" disorder can function at a very high level, but create a situation in which the people around him can never do it right. For the pastor to accurately assess what is happening will require observation, thoughtfulness and, most likely, the input of astute guides who have some training and experience in sorting out the various dynamics of "difficult people."

Strategies to Consider:
The pastor can become increasingly aware of his/her own sensitivities and triggers. This can help to discern if the pastor's experience with the individual is interpersonally unique or an experience shared by others.

The pastor may be able to discuss this with the elders or an elder as a way of gaining broader perspective.

Many pastors find that meeting regularly with a mental health professional can help them respond effectively to the ongoing challenges of difficult behavior.

Some strategic reading and discussion with peers can be helpful.

It may be helpful to come to some awareness that dealing with difficult people is not an unusual experience in parish ministry and that there are appropriate ways to share the pain and proactively respond so as not to lose one's heart or appetite for ministry.

For Discussion:

- Are there currently individuals within my congregation I would describe as "difficult"? How am I currently responding? Is that working? Is it helpful to the congregation?
- How much of my thought time is being given to this situation? Is this appropriate given the circumstances?
- With whom am I processing this? Is this working and is it wise? (If married: What are the benefits and limits of discussing this with your spouse?)

Resources:

Boers, Arthur Paul, *Never Call Them Jerks*, Herndon, Va: The Alban Institute, 1999.

Friedman, Edwin H., *Friedman's Fables*. New York: The Guilford Press, 1990.

Friedman, Edwin H., Margaret M. Treadwell, and Edward W. Beal, *A Failure of Nerve, Leadership in the Age of the Quick Fix.* Bethesda, Md: The Edwin Friedman Estate, 1999.

Mason, Paul T. & Randi Kreger, *Stop Walking on Eggshells*. Oakland, Calif: New Harbinger Publications, Inc., 1998.

Rediger, G. Lloyd, *Clergy Killers: Guidance for Pastors and Congregations Under Attack*, Westminster John Knox Press: Louisville, 1997.

Steinke, Peter, *Congregational Leadership in Anxious Times – Being Calm and Courageous No Matter What*. Herndon, Va: The Alban Institute, 2006.

Single in Parish Ministry

Being single, whether unmarried or previously married, and ministering in a parish setting presents its own set of opportunities and challenges. Most congregations in the CRCNA do not have experience with single pastors. Therefore, many single pastors find themselves working within a context where most of their colleagues are married.

As with married people in ministry, there is no one pattern by which singles can be defined. There are however discussion points that can lend some encouragement to conversations within a mentoring relationship in which either the mentor or the mentee is single.

For Discussion:

- What are some of your feelings about singleness in ministry?
- To what extent is it a chosen course for you?
- How does this play into your thinking about singleness in ministry?

Singles in ministry recognize various opportunities: freedom of schedule, greater margins in time, and the potential for pursuing an aspect of ministry without undue consideration for another person. Another benefit cited by a single pastor was the frequency with which congregates invited her over for meals and the opportunities this presented for becoming acquainted with the members of the congregation.

- What are some of the opportunities you are experiencing that are related to your singleness?

Singles in ministry may also experience challenges: issues of loneliness and a longing for intimacy. Congregations might respond in a variety of ways to pastors who are single—some helpful and some not. Every congregation is unique.

- What are some of the challenges you are experiencing that are related to your singleness?
- Where will you find a sense of community beyond the limits of congregational life?
- Who can help you gain perspective after a difficult council meeting?

Spousal Connection

Role Negotiable – Support Essential

There are few professions practiced by married people that impact spouses more than pastoral ministry. The connections between the pastor's professional life and personal life are integral and multidimensional. The manner in which the pastor and the spouse respond to these dynamics is an important topic for conversation.

It can be said that the approach pastors and spouses take to these dynamics is as diverse as the people and situations represented. Although, at one time, there may have been a standard pattern to which all pastoral couples were called and by which they were evaluated, in most contexts this is no longer the case. It cannot be said, however, that this new situation renders the topic irrelevant. Some of the variables that will impact the pastor's effectiveness and resilience in ministry are the response of the pastor to his/her spouse, the response of the spouse to the ministry, and the relationship of the congregation to the spouse and the pastoral couple. Additionally, the emergence of married people, both of whom are professional pastors, generates new opportunities and issues that will invite further reflection and conversation.

The following are some starting points to meaningful conversation. Perhaps some of them will stimulate important conversations between the pastor and spouse as well as between the mentor and mentee. The mentor and mentee may also invite the spouse of the mentee, and perhaps of the mentor, to join in the interchange.

For Discussion for Pastors and Spouses:

- How much have we shared in the preparation process for parish ministry?
- To what extent have we discussed the implications that responding to this call will have/is having upon:
  - our marriage
  - our family
  - our friendships
  - our schedules
  - our respective roles
  - our finances

Many clergy couples have found value in exploring their respective places and roles in their families of origin. This can lead to greater understanding of their sense of place within the congregational family.

- Is this something we have explored or would like to explore?

Spousal cooperation is seen as an important characteristic for church planters. This does not imply that the spouse's time is devoted to the congregation, but it does suggest a certain attitude and perspective.

- To what extent do we see this as relevant to our current ministry?

- How is it not relevant?

Finding a safe place in terms of trusting relationships can be elusive for pastors and spouses.

- To what extent is this a challenge for you?
- How is the spouse finding an arena in which there is a level playing field for candid conversation?

Married life can bring many changes. So can ministry.

- Talk about the way in which changes in your marriage and family are impacting your ministry.
- Talk about how changes in ministry are impacting your marriage and family.

- Do any of the above questions concern us?
- How might our reaction to a question prompt further exploration?

Resources:

Cloud, Henry and John Townsend. *Boundaries*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992.

Gilbert, Roberta. *Extraordinary Relationships*. New York: Doubleday, 1990.

Sustaining Pastoral Excellence. *Marriage and Ministry*. Grand Rapids: Christian Reformed Church in North America, 2008.

Pastors, Parenting and Potpourri

Pastors are unique and live in unique situations. Many are married and have children. Others find themselves in different situations. The purpose of this module is to help begin a conversation between mentor (and spouse?) and mentee (and spouse?) about the specific dynamics that will inform and intersect with parish ministry. Mentees, and perhaps mentors, are invited and encouraged to address applicable situations with candor, sensitivity, and a desire to honor the inevitable and complex ways in which the situation of the pastor interacts with parish ministry.

An important dynamic for married pastors with children is to consider the interplay between the parental role and the pastoral role. And it is important to acknowledge that a module about parenting opens the door to many unique situations for pastors, some of which are:

- Having one or more children.
- Struggling with infertility.
- Consciously choosing not to have children.
- Having a child or children with "special needs".
- Having adopted children—potentially with different ethnicities.
- Having a "blended" family where there is an additional father or mother.
- Unmarried individuals adopting children.

Whatever your situation, it will affect your ministry. Questions arise around how it affects your ministry, your awareness of these dynamics, and the strategies you develop to be whole and healthy in the various facets of life.

The following questions are intended to help launch a conversation. You are encouraged to adapt these questions/prepare your own to provide the framework for a helpful conversation.

For Discussion:

- What is your home/family situation? How does it impact your ministry?
- How does your situation help you relate to some members of your congregation? How may it inhibit relationships with others?
- Where do you find it most difficult to develop and maintain boundaries between home/family life and work?
- What are your congregation's expectations around "Hallmark holidays" such as Mother's Day and Father's Day? How will you think about worship and preaching on these holidays?
- What else about your situation attracts your thought time, your prayer time, and your conversation with others?
- With whom are you most comfortable discussing the joys and challenges of your current situation? If you lack that kind of support, what can you do to change that?

- What unique circumstances should you consider in this area?

Resources:

(Both mentor and mentee are invited to develop a list of helpful resources.)

Money

Financial matters are integral to the life of ministry. The subject of money is addressed frequently in the Bible; in fact, more frequently than many might realize. Financial matters can present a myriad of challenges for pastors and their congregations.

Finances and the Pastor
Managing your personal finances is a basic issue of responsible discipleship. It is an issue that is directly or indirectly related to a many of other issues such as balancing concerns for family with concerns for church or the desire to be treated fairly while not wanting to stir up trouble.

Thoughts about education, recreation, retirement, pastoral tenure, and stress often include a financial component. Under or over-focusing on this area can be detrimental to one's personal, family, or vocational life.

For Discussion:

Personal finances
- Do I tend to over-focus or under-focus on this dimension of life?
- What can I do to make a positive, corrective move relative to money?

Spouse and family
- How does money play into our marital relationship?
- How would we like money to function?
- How are we teaching money management to our children?
- How does one's history with money impact the present?

Finances and the Pastor-Congregation Relationship
One frequent point of tension for pastors is that of financial compensation and benefits. Money often becomes an issue in discussions of pastoral performance, pastoral tenure, and the daily life of the congregation. Fair, objective, and prudent approaches to issues of pastoral compensation and church budget can be difficult to achieve.

For Discussion:

Compensation/benefits
- How can I encourage structures and procedures in the life of the church that help objectify discussions and decisions concerning this issue?
- How can I manage myself in the congregation so that I am able to stay in the discussion with clarity, assertiveness, and conviction without becoming actively or passively reactive to the dynamics in the room?

Finances and Pastoral Instruction
A key aspect of following Jesus is the stewardship of the God's resources. Congregations need to hear about money from the pulpit and in the classroom. Doing this wisely and well is not always easy. As much as with any other issue, the congregation's response to the message will be closely tied to its response to the messenger.

For Discussion:

Talk about wise and unwise approaches to preaching and teaching about money and stewardship in the congregation.

- Who among my colleagues is doing this well and might be able to provide help with strategic thinking about this dimension of ministry?

Resources:

Burkett, Larry and Ron Blue. *Wealth to Last.* Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2003.

The latest pastoral compensation survey is mailed to all pastors in July of each year. Additional copies are available by calling 800.272.5125 or 616.224.0833, or by e-mail haynesn@crcna.org

Working in the CRCNA

Church historians may well observe that at the turn of the millennium denominations in North America are at risk of being marginalized or ignored. The rise of large, entrepreneurial, independent congregations has led to "teaching churches." On many fronts, these churches are providing resources for congregations and pastors in ways that formerly came from denominational agencies. How pastors understand this new way of getting information is worthy of prayerful and reflective meditation and discernment.

Denominational agencies continue to provide foundational services without which many congregations would be searching for comparable supports. These services pertain not only to ministry delivery but also to background assistance in the area of governance, communal study of current issues, finances, abuse prevention, pastor-church relations, and disability concerns. The development and delivery of various ministries throughout the world also extend the reach of local congregations. Additionally, denominational task forces and standing committees are actively adapting to the changing church culture and are seeking to provide up-to-speed resources for local congregations and their leaders.

In this changing context, pastors entering into ministry or currently engaged in ministry within the CRCNA can be dealing with many thoughts and feelings about the denominational connections that are significant factors in their ministry.

The reality is that people engaged in this mentoring initiative are ministering within the context of a denomination called the Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRCNA). Understanding this denomination and our participation in it is an important aspect to pastoral ministry.

Understanding the CRCNA

Just as doing some cultural anthropology is important for a pastor beginning a relationship with a congregation, so also is this kind of study and reflection relative to the denomination. Understanding the CRCNA in terms of its history, its polity, its structure, its many faces, its changing climate, and its current issues is part of practicing ministry in this context. Pastors who ignore these aspects of their context do so at their own risk and that of their congregation.

Learning about the CRCNA could involve:

- Strategic reading. What have you read? What could you read?
- Conversations with those experienced in the CRCNA.
- Conversations with those who have recently entered the CRCNA.
- Conversations with those who have left the CRCNA.

Understanding Your Own Thoughts and Attitudes about the CRC
One aspect of understanding the CRCNA is becoming familiar with the lenses through which you are looking. Your personal experiences and relationships can reduce or distort the awareness you have of this larger church community.

You are encouraged to reflect on some of the following:

- Your own history.
- The era that is shaping you.
- Your past experiences, or that of your family, with the CRCNA.
- Your family's attitudes toward the CRCNA.
- Your thoughts about institutions .
- Your basic way of thinking about the church-as-organism/church-as-institution dynamic.

Resources:

Christian Reformed Church in North America. *What It Means to Be Reformed – An Identity Statement.* Grand Rapids: CRC Publications, 2002.

Bennis, Warren. *Geeks & Geezers*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2002.

Pastor Transitions

A Kenny Rogers song catches some of the dynamics around transitions in ministry. He sings, "You've got to know when to hold 'em, know when to fold 'em, know when to walk away, and know when to run." Knowing "what time it is" in parish ministry is no easy task. Many pastors will find a time in life when this is the case. In fact, it is not unlikely that within your first five years of ministry you will be asking yourself questions about the time to move on. These questions will come and go throughout your ministry seasons and will be no less relevant when you are within five years of retirement.

Discerning whether it is time to make a transition involves a variety of internal and external factors. Although it is a very personal dynamic, it is usually not an issue that involves only the pastor. Others affect, and are affected by, decisions in these areas.

One overarching factor pertains to our sense of identity. David Rich, the Presbyterian pastor who has thought long and hard about the transition to retirement, challenges pastors to consider their baptism as the primary identity shaping event of their lives. As he develops it, this emphasis provides a timeless source of identity that is not conditioned by the situational variables of life.

For Discussion:

- What external situations/developments are contributing to your current thoughts about transition? - These could be age, health, spousal dynamics, relationship with congregation etc.
- What internal processes are at work as you think about transition? - These could be observations, beliefs, intuitions, etc.
- What dynamics have the most impact for you in the development of your self perception, your identity? How do you see yourself as you anticipate the inevitable transitions of your life?

Resources:

Oswald, Roy M., James M. Heath, & Ann W. Heath. *Beginning Ministry Together: The Alban Handbook for Clergy Transitions*. Herndon, Va: The Alban Institute, 2003.

Sustaining Pastoral Excellence. *Closing Well—Continuing Strong: Walking with pastors during their transition from ministry to retirement and beyond.* Grand Rapids: Christian Reformed Church in North America, 2006.

Willard, Dallas. *In Search of Guidance: Developing a Conversational Relationship with God*. Downers Grove, Ill: InterVaristy Press,1999.

Endings

Whether the mentoring relationship has lasted for six months or five years, the formal relationship will come to a close. Ending this relationship well has value not only for the mentor and mentee but also for other *endings* that are inevitable parts of life. The thoughtful reflection that goes into this closure process can inform occasions of saying good-bye to important people in your life and to the congregation(s) that you serve.

Formal preparation for ministry usually includes important teaching on developing relationships. An important but neglected aspect of pastoral life pertains to the ending of relationships. Saying good-bye, when expressed with wise timing and sensitivity, is a profoundly pastoral and reality affirming practice.

For Discussion:

Talk about *endings* that you have experienced.

- How have they gone?
- To what extent did you affirm the experience of saying good-bye?
- How did you leave seminary or other educational institutions? Did you express your good-byes? What was leftover that remains relative to your most recent endings?

Talk about the *ending* of the mentoring relationship.

- How will you do that?
- What happens if the mentor and mentee have different desires relative to how or when that should happen?

Resources:

Blackburn, Richard, and Robert Williamson. *Facilitating Healthy Pastor-Congregation Relations.* Lombard, Ill.: Lombard Mennonite Peace Center, 1998.

Friedman, Edwin H. *Generation to Generation.* New York: Guilford, 1985. (Particularly see chapter 10.)

Strategies for Life-Long Learning

Effective pastors are those who foster an inquisitive spirit and a commitment to learning. The mentoring program is intended to build those values into the pastoral vocation within the CRCNA. One indication that this is happening occurs when pastors are able to articulate their learning goals and strategies for their next season of ministry.

Throughout the mentoring program, and especially in the last two of the pastor's first five years, conversations about life-long learning strategies are in order. These will arise out of the pastor's spiritual journey and the needs he or she perceives within the church of Jesus Christ.

Examples of Life-Long Learning Strategies Include:

- having a mentor for the next season
- becoming a mentor
- participating in a book club
- pursuing an advanced degree
- developing sermon preparation groups
- taking a quarter of concurrent clinical pastoral education
- pursuing a course of study directly related to ministry
- pursuing a course of study indirectly related to ministry such as:
    - marketing
    - counseling
    - leadership
    - public speaking

For Discussion:

- What do you believe about continuing education? How important is it to you? To your ministry?
- Where do you sense God may be leading in this dimension of your ministry preparation?
- What strategies for exploring options do you have in place?

Resources:

Alban Institute - http://www.alban.org/

Variations on the Theme

Customized Mentoring

An underlying assumption of the mentoring initiative is that there are tendencies, patterns, and qualities common to all people—especially to those in professional ministry. Apart from these common elements, a broad-scale initiative would be pointless. However, it is also the case that there are an infinite number of variables that characterize mentors, mentees, and the mentoring relationship. Consequently, every mentor and mentee will need to customize the approach they take to the mentoring process.

For example, there is the variable of *motivation.* To what extent is a person motivated intrinsically by internal principles, passions, and goals? To what extent is a person motivated extrinsically by external expectations, pressures, and influences? Along a continuum of this motivational mechanism there are countless variables of topics and people that defy neat categorization.

The mentor and mentee will need to develop sensitivity to these variables, including this variable of motivation. An extrinsically motivated person may well benefit from articulated objectives to be accomplished in measurable ways between mentoring sessions. A more intrinsically motivated person may find these kinds of objectives artificial and demotivating. The mentor may recognize within himself a need to objectify some function of the relationship. This, too, can be a discussion point in the mentoring relationship. You are encouraged to talk about what kind of patterns and practices will work best in your unique interactions.

Optional Strategies/Approaches to the Mentoring Process

<u>More Extrinsic Strategies</u>
Establish measurable objectives based on the mentoring session.

- What will the mentee do, read, produce, and by when?
- What will the mentor do?
- What observations, considerations, and thoughts will the mentee bring to the next meeting?
- How will we revisit this topic in future meetings?

<u>More Intrinsic Strategies</u>
With more intrinsic strategies, the mentor will explore with the mentee what he/she has been pondering, considering, or wondering about since the last meeting. By listening well, by providing observations and feedback, and by occasionally asking questions, the mentor can guide the mentee's pursuit of clarity and understanding in a particular area.

The mentor will also ask how these thoughts have affected the mentee's work, relationships, and goals for the coming season.

For Discussion:

The mentor and mentee may want to experiment with different approaches to the mentoring relationship. What is important is that the approach provides a fitting combination of support, guidance, and challenge.

Group and Peer Mentoring

As efforts are made to develop a mentoring culture in the CRCNA, there is high value in promoting creativity and innovation. Two approaches are the practices of group mentoring and peer mentoring. Both of these merit encouragement and support.

Factors That Serve to Strengthen These Initiatives

- Consistent meeting and participation by all those who are involved contributes to increased trust and continuity of conversation.
- The presence of a collegial spirit contributes an appreciation of the unique gifts, challenges, and contexts of all those participating.

The Function of Leadership

In group mentoring, this will usually involve an experienced pastor with the gifts and sense of call for mentoring a group of less-experienced pastors. In peer mentoring, there will be sufficient leadership gifts within the group to ensure that the group does not stagnate or lose its ability to move beyond existing comfort zones. These gifts will also ensure that the individuals within the group are respected and appreciated for their current place in, and approach to, ministry.

Group and peer mentoring ought not eclipse all one-on-one mentoring. A one-on-one relationship with a seasoned mentor is still valuable and expected. However, the nature and frequency of the one-to-one meetings can certainly be adjusted when group mentoring or peer mentoring is also in play.

Cross-Gender Mentoring

In the CRCNA today it may not be possible for a female mentee to have a female mentor. Therefore female and male pastors may work together on ministry growth and development in a mentoring relationship. This type of relationship is increasing as more women are called and ordained to pastoral positions—positions that have traditionally been held by men. Accordingly, it is likely that women will be mentored by men and men mentored by women.

In the context of the CRCNA, it is unwise and inappropriate to disallow these kinds of mentoring relationships. It is also unwise to encourage these cross-gender relationships without a clear discussion of guidelines and boundaries that inform a decision to move in this direction. It must be said that cross-gender mentoring relationships are not prudent for every potential mentor or mentee.

Some Important Guidelines for Cross-Gender Mentoring

- The mentor should have had significant experiences in having his or her own work supervised. Experiences such as clinical pastoral education or parish residencies are examples of the kinds of environment in which this type of supervision can happen.
- The mentor is undergoing supervision or accountability.
- The mentee is advised to develop concurrent same-gender collegial or advisory relationships.

Current demographics could produce a high proportion of situations in which men are mentoring women. Rev. Karl Van Harn, an experienced clinical pastoral education supervisor, identifies three important dynamics to be considered as men are mentoring women in ministry.

Power

- How does the male pastor use power in ministry?
- How does he use power in the relationship with the female pastor?

Knowledge and Perspective

- How does the female pastor view things differently from the male pastor?
- How do pastors learn and come to know what they know? (It is important for the male pastor to imaginatively enter into the female pastor's experience.)

Identity Development

- How does a female pastor develop a pastoral identity?
- How can the male mentor be an ally to the female mentee and together face the issues of her experiences?

Increasingly, there are numbers of situations in which women mentor men. Pastors recognize that the uniqueness of individuals, relationships, and ministry contexts will

greatly influence the shape of these mentoring relationships. For example, the mentoring relationship that develops in an institutional setting where women have long held positions of authority will be different from those developed in some congregational settings—especially if a congregation has only recently moved from a male dominated leadership climate.

Given these various dynamics, mentees and potential mentors are encouraged to seek counsel from the regional pastor and other colleagues before initiating cross-gender mentoring relationships.

Resources

Belenky, Mary Field, et al. *Women's Ways of Knowing*. New York: Basic Books, 1986.

Culbertson, Philip L. *Counseling Men.* Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994.

Doehring, Carrie. *Taking Care.* Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995.

Gilligan, Carol. *In a Different Voice.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982.

Glaz, Maxine, and Jeanne Stevenson Moessner. *Women in Travail and Transition.* Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991.

Reporting Form

This form should be completed annually by both the mentor and the mentee with copies being sent to the regional pastor and the Pastor-Church Relations Office (PCR). Electronic communications are preferred. Please e-mail PCR for an electronic copy of this form at palsrokl@crcna.org *Please e-mail PCR your completed form at the end of each year and send a copy to your regional pastor.*

In one or two sentences describe the nature of your mentoring relationship.

Indicate the number and type of meetings you have had. (face to face; phone etc.)

Identify the mentoring modules you have covered in the past year.

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

In your mind, what would enhance the mentoring relationship for the coming year?

How has the mentoring relationship contributed to your life and ministry?

Additional References

Benner, David G. *Sacred Companions.* Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2002.

Biehl, Bob. *Mentoring.* Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1996.

Day, Katie. *Difficult Conversations.* Bethesda, Md.: 2001.

Whitehead, James D. and Evelyn Eaton Whitehead. *The Promise of Partnership.* San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1991.

Wright, Walter, Jr. *The Gift of Mentors.* Pasadena, Calif.: De Pree Leadership Center, 2001.

Appendices

A

THE PASTORAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE

THE CASE OF PASTOR JOHN

Pastor John had come to his new congregation--his second--with high expectations. He would make his ministry count. The church would grow. The services would be joyful. The place would hum with activity. He had discussed his vision of ministry with the members of the calling committee and they had certainly seemed excited. The congregation was excited, too--at least initially. They seemed to accept their new pastor's zeal.

The disillusionment came later. People began wishing their pastor would be more appreciative of the congregation's traditional ways of worship. And couldn't he participate more in family doings in the church? Couldn't he stop by for a cup of coffee sometime? And why did he have to push community outreach so much?

Gradually Pastor John began to wonder why people showed so little appreciation for his hard work. Why was it so hard to get volunteers for the programs he had started? Why was the consistory so hesitant about backing his proposals? By the end of the second year he felt tired and discouraged. Less than two years later, following an unfortunate conflict with two families in the church, Pastor John resigned.

All this took place some years ago, but when we sat down together and discussed what had happened, it became clear that the hurt still lingered. I asked Pastor John the question I have so often asked of hurting pastors: did you have someone to talk with when all these events were taking place? His answer was tentative, and it seemed evident to me that he had not really confided in anyone during those troubled years. If he had, might things have turned out differently? Might he have suffered less distress?

Anyone who goes through conflict needs sustained personal ministry. I have heard pastors reflect on the early years of their ministry and tell of one trusted member in

whom they had totally confided--someone who was always ready to listen and to encourage. The ideal in this demanding age would be that churches designate some of their wisest and most caring members to provide pastoral care for the pastor. Such care would then be available to the pastor before relational problems might arise, since the focus of this care would be more on prevention than on conflict resolution.

Pastor-Church Relations has given much attention to this kind of support for pastors and their wives.

A SYNOD'S CONCERN

As early as 1978, after noting that many pastors struggle with stress and problem situations, synod mandated the Synodical Interim Committee to lay the groundwork for a comprehensive ministry to pastors and churches, especially in the area of their mutual interdependence.

In 1982 upon SIC's recommendation, synod gave Pastor-Church Relations (PCR) a mandate to implement the following provisions:

1) appoint a full-time director of Pastor-Church Relations (PCR).

2) appoint regional pastors to unsalaried, part-time positions, designed to direct and coordinate the ministry to pastors and churches in their classical districts.

3) appoint mentors for pastors recently ordained to the gospel ministry.

4) assist congregations in appointing a support group for the pastor and (if she wishes to participate) his wife to be known as "the pastoral relations committee."

This paper explores the possibilities of this last concern of synod: *THE PASTORAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE*.

WHAT IS A PASTORAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE?

A good relationship between a pastor and church members make for a good ministry. Good relationships depend on good communication. As mentioned above, the 1982 Synod suggested that local churches establish pastoral relations committees to promote and maintain good communication between a pastor and the congregation and, in general, to support the pastor.

The pastoral relations committee is an excellent way of nurturing a positive and helpful relationship between pastor and congregation. It should also be able to detect at an early stage any deterioration of this relationship and would then work for timely intervention. Synod envisioned a ministry to pastor-couples with a double focus: healing and prevention and also correcting and nurturing. Synod of 1981 stated that the purpose of this committee would be to "promote better communication between congregation and the pastor, and vice versa." PCR's Long Range Planning Committee noted in 1987: "The two main purposes of a congregational pastoral relations committee are to promote and maintain good communication between the pastor and the congregation and to support the pastor." Thus, in a positive way the committee would provide the pastor with supportive sharing with regard to expectations, feelings, tensions, hopes, ideals, and achievements--all with the one goal of enriching the relationship between pastor and members.

WHY SUDDENLY THIS NEW PROVISION?

For generations, ministers have functioned without pastoral relations committees. Why are they needed now? A minister may relate well to the congregation without one, but that does not mean that ministry could not be enhanced by having such a committee.

Let us examine the underlying idea. A pastor will do two things in order to establish good relationships with the congregation. First, the pastor will attempt to <u>know the members</u> of the congregation--their needs, convictions, concerns, and circumstances. Secondly, the pastor will want to <u>monitor the members' response</u> to the ministry. Their appreciation will affirm the pastor, and their criticism will help him to evaluate the ministry constructively. Usually a pastor does these two things intuitively for daily interaction with parishioners helps to learn about the people's needs and to determine whether or not the ministry is on course. A pastoral relations committee, however, can function as an additional and effective tool toward attainment of these goals.

In a setting of trust and esteem the pastor can gain from the committee an accurate appraisal of the needs of the congregation. The committee members are in a favorable position to review with the pastor the congregation's response to ministry without flattery or harsh judgment. Developments and background situations can be examined in a balanced way, strong points in the ministry can be highlighted and weaknesses can be considered in a spirit of dispassionate concern. Together the committee and the pastor-couple can pray for well-being, spiritual vigor and blessings on the demanding task of ministry. The appreciation, affection and concerns of the congregation can be given sincere and appropriate expression by the committee.

BUT WHAT ABOUT THE ELDERS?

Is it not the duty of the elders to do all these things that synod has assigned to these support committees? Yes, the elders do have a prior responsibility to minister to their pastor's professional and spiritual needs.

However, elders are not always in the best position to minister to their pastor in every respect. Elders are the pastor's supervisors, and the pastor may be hesitant to inform them of problems that might reflect adversely on professional performance. The pastor will more readily speak from the heart to a trusted prayer partner to whom there is no direct accountability for the quality of work. The pastor can afford to share information with the committee since it will not have to become part of the council's records.

At the same time the pastoral relations committee must function within prudent limits. The committee is not a shadow council. It does not set policies and it does not launch programs. In short, the committee will be careful not to encroach upon the territory of the council and will only serve the pastor in that all-important area of the relationship to the congregation.

WHAT, THEN, IS A PASTORAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE?

A pastoral relations committee is generally composed of three mature church members who meet with the pastor and spouse in a setting of acceptance and confidentiality to

1) engage in fellowship and prayer

2) gain a broader perspective on the pastor's ministry

3) assess the pastor's involvement in congregational life

While the pastor:

1) receives encouragement toward personal and professional growth

2) gains additional insights into the responses and expectations of the congregation

If a valid relationship is to develop in a non-threatening atmosphere, the committee members must carefully guard the trust the pastor has placed in them.

HOW TO HAVE QUALITY MEETINGS

What are the characteristics of committees that have successfully ministered to pastor-couples? Committees and pastors generally agree on the following:

CONFIDENTIALITY--A pastoral relations committee does not operate in deep secrecy. However the substance of the meetings remains with the committee members and is not shared with other church members.

DISCRETION--The committee members are discreet about the questions they address to the pastor-couple. Thoughtfulness, kindness, prudence, and patience all add to the value of the meetings.

SINCERITY--The committee attempts to sincerely enter into the pastor's situation in order to care for both the pastor and spouse. It is not afraid to express due concern.

LISTENING ABILITY--Committee members must ask themselves if they have really heard and understood what the pastor-couple are saying to them. They are impartial, sympathetic listeners.

CANDOR--Intentions and concerns are expressed openly and honestly. In this setting, candor and charity go together.

PROMPTNESS--Meetings are held regularly according to a fixed schedule and should be reasonably brief. The convener should feel free to terminate discussions that are less than fruitful. The committee should never meet without the pastor.

PRAYER--Prayer is a prominent element of the meetings. Prayers are appropriate during the meetings as well as at the beginning and end. Whenever a need or a concern has been discussed, it is proper to pray about it. Prayer greatly enhances the quality of the sessions.

BUT WHAT ABOUT THE NUTS AND BOLTS OF THE MINISTRY?

The focus of the pastoral relations committee is primarily on personal ministry to the pastor-couple. Its concerns are with relational, rather than functional, matters. Although the committee is not a decision-making and direction-setting body, the council may wish to delegate certain additional responsibilities to the committee. These responsibilities would lie especially in the area of the committee's function as the pastor's advocate--the ombudsman, as it were. Some examples follow.

1) The pastor might discuss with the committee some aspects of workload and then follow up the discussion by addressing certain proposals to the council.

2) The pastor might review the compensation package for the coming year with the committee which could then decide to address some recommendations on the pastor's behalf to the council or finance committee.

3) The pastor might seek advice of the committee regarding continuing education possibilities and, again, the committee could direct proposals on his behalf to the council.

4) The pastor might bring the housing situation to the committee's attention and they could approach the proper committee on the pastor's behalf for improvements.

5) The committee might assist the pastor in resolving harmful situations that have become obstacles to ministry.

6) The committee might help the pastor to clarify and implement certain components of the job description.

HOW TO APPOINT THE PASTORAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE: A MODEL

The pastor and fellow office-bearers may devise their own ways of appointing a pastoral relations committee, but the following models have been helpful to many churches that have used them.

APPOINTING A COMMITTEE FOR A NEWLY-ARRIVED PASTOR

We have found that there are some real advantages to appointing selected members from the pastoral search committee to serve as the pastoral relations committee. The search committee conducted negotiations during the search for a pastor and is intimately acquainted with the expectations of both pastor and congregation regarding the ministry that is about to commence. Former search committee members would be well equipped to harmonize the two.

If a pastoral relations committee is formed from the members of the search committee, it would be in everyone's best interest to have it serve only for a transitional period of about a year. After that time, a pastoral relations committee can be appointed as described in the following section.

APPOINTING A COMMITTEE FOR AN ESTABLISHED PASTOR

Step 1: The council and pastor familiarize themselves with the idea of having a pastoral relations committee by reading and discussing this paper.

Step 2: The council mandates two of its members (preferably the vice president and clerk) to meet with the pastor and spouse. Together they outline the design and purpose of the pastoral relations committee. They then select three to five mature church members to serve on the committee. One (but no more than one) member

should be an elder, and both men and women from the congregation should be represented as well as members of various ages.

Step 3: The two elders report the names selected to the council.

Step 4: At their initial meeting, the committee and the pastor-couple should consider the format and the frequency of their meetings. One member should be designated as convener and put in charge of the meetings, although the convener should assume a low profile. From time to time, the committee, without betraying confidences, will assure the council that it meets faithfully. It will also report on matters which are properly the council's concern.

QUALIFICATIONS OF COMMITTEE MEMBERS

The pastor and church will be best served by a committee composed of church members who are spiritually and emotionally mature and who have the respect of the congregation. They should have such qualities as love for the Lord and His cause, understanding, discretion, caring, sensitivity, patience, flexibility, humility and honesty.

Members must be persons who can gain the pastor's trust, but who are candid enough to encourage the pastor to grow where growth is needed. Their empathy with the pastor should not blind them to areas of possible improvement. They should be able to understand the needs and viewpoints of both congregation and pastor and contribute to a harmonious blending of the two. They should, in short, have both spiritual stature and people skills.

HOW OFTEN SHOULD THE COMMITTEE MEET?

The needs and goals of both committee and pastor must determine how frequently meetings are held, but a regular meeting schedule is necessary for the development of a high level of comfort and trust. Meetings should be held monthly and additional meetings could then be scheduled for specific reasons relating to personal needs or for periodic reviews of the pastor's role in the church's program.

SOME EXAMPLES OF THINGS COMMITTEES AND THE PASTOR TALK ABOUT

It will take some time before the committee members and pastor feel comfortable with each other. At first they may wonder what they will talk about. Patience is necessary. Trust relationships grow slowly.

Perhaps committees can learn from each other. I phoned some members of pastoral relations committees and pastors and asked them, "What do you talk about at your get-togethers?" I have made a random selection of some of their answers which you may find helpful as discussion starters in your own committee meetings.

Some openers committee members might find useful are:

"Pastor, how was your week?"

"Some people seem to think that pastors never have spiritual problems, but I think that must be a serious misconception."

"September is a very busy month, pastor. You must feel spread thin at times."

"Pastor, several members heard the critical remarks _____ made about you after the Sunday morning service. Did those remarks bother you?"

"Pastor, is it hard to always keep a sense of calling?"
"Yesterday I read this Bible verse which, I think, has a message for us all."

"Pastor, does your meeting schedule allow you to spend enough evenings at home?"

". . . is your salary sufficient?"

"Let each one of us express a personal concern and pray about that concern around our circle."

While the pastor-couple might use the following:

"I want to set some time aside daily for prayer and meditation, but I seem to lack the discipline to stick to a schedule."

"This week I had to struggle to get my sermons written."

"Sometimes it bothers me that we don't have real friends."

"Congregational expectations sometimes strike me as being unrealistic."
"We have a family problem. . . ."

"I find it hard to talk about my feelings."

"I had a run-in with _____, and it really bothers me."

"Do you think I should visit more with members of the congregation?"
"Do you think I have been here too long?"

"_____ implied that I am not a very good listener. Do you feel the same way?"

"I can't help being protective of my husband. He works so hard. Criticism from the congregation gives me sleepless nights."

PRCS FOR PASTORS SERVING IN STAFF POSITIONS

The question is regularly asked: does each member on a multiple staff require his/her own pastoral relations committee or would a single committee suffice?

I have consulted with committees and pastors about this and found that both arrangements have advantages but also disadvantages. A single committee for all staff members has the advantage of consistency and uniformity. However, trust relationships are more easily established with separate committees for each staff member.

If a council elects to have a single committee for the entire staff, the best elements of both arrangements can be preserved by meeting separately with each staff member and periodically with all staff members together.

* *

Ultimately, good relationships are the joint responsibility of congregation, council and pastor(s). The pastoral relations committee will make its contribution by clarifying such basic issues as expectations, roles, needs and perceptions. Once this has been done, the smaller and more pragmatic items can be dealt with openly and constructively. By serving the pastor, the committee serves the whole congregation. In the end, everyone benefits.

Elders, deacons, pastors and pastoral relations committees are invited to contact the **PCRC regional pastor** of their classis for help and advice in organizing this ministry and for aid in assuring its effective functioning. They may also contact Pastor-Church Relations at the address below.

Pastor-Church Relations
2850 Kalamazoo Ave. SE
Grand Rapids, MI 49560

The Lord bless his people everywhere.

B

CRAIG BARNES

Tattered, Bruised–and Used

The word *flannelgraph* conjures up memories for anyone who grew up in church a generation ago. Now in the age of digital video, the old flannelgraph is long retired. But it did teach me something as a child that can never be learned from its electronic successors in Christian education.

Flannelgraphs were large boards wrapped tightly in flannel, usually perched on wooden easels. Mrs. Williams, my second grade Sunday school teacher, told her Bible stories with the children seated on the floor around her. As she introduced each character of the story, she would place a paper figure of that person up on the board. She pressed the figure into the flannel, sliding her long bony fingers back and forth across it. Magically the little paper characters stayed attached to the flannel.

Well, most of them did. Mrs. Williams always had trouble with the apostle Paul. He had been overused in the stories and he didn't smooth out so well. Long ago someone had spilled Kool-Aid on Paul, discoloring his robe.

One day, two of us got in a fight over who would hand the apostle to Mrs. Williams. We tore his troubled little head right off. The tape that then held him together made it even harder for Paul to stick to the board. But he was clearly the most memorable of all the figures.

It was as if his paper-thin life proclaimed a holy mystery to me even then: *God is not easy on the people who get used in the gospel drama.* But we do receive the most wonderful blessing for our troubles, which is worn on our lives. It's called character.

Spiritual character is what's most needed in Christian leadership today, and yet we cannot learn or achieve it. There is no psychological test or spiritual gifts inventory that can adequately measure it. No seminary offers a degree program in it. Character only comes, a day at a time, as we allow ourselves to be over-handled by the story.

Every day the pastor confronts disgruntled parishioners who are not going to be satisfied, e-mails that multiply at the speed of light, committee meetings that go south, staff conflicts, financial pressures, and rushed trips to the hospital only to discover that the parishioner was just discharged (you won't get credit for this one). Meanwhile Sunday is getting closer and the sermon is a long way from done. Some days it feels like little gets accomplished, except the next morning the pastor finds a few more gray hairs.

The longer I serve the church, the less I believe that God is all that concerned with what pastors get accomplished. One of the great things about being God, I suppose, is that he doesn't need help. But God is very concerned about who we are as leaders of his church.

Thus, the Holy Spirit is determined to complete our transformation into the image of Jesus Christ. Often it hurts to be in the hands of that sacred creativity. There is no easy way to receive the character of Christ.

God is not easy on the people who get used in the gospel drama.

Paul was rewarded for proclaiming the gospel by being kicked out of half the cities he visited, usually with a shower of rocks behind him. He concluded his letter to the Galatians by saying, "I carry the marks of Jesus branded on my body."

But that wasn't the hard part. The hard part was that he had to keep giving his hurt and failures back to God, who just kept turning it into joy and passion for the gospel.

Anybody can talk about the gospel. People of character illustrate its resurrection power in their own ministries.

It is amazing how stained and battered church leaders are. Frankly, the best of us are taped together with prayers and need a lot of smoothing out. But I wonder if in the eyes of God this is when we finally start to look interesting. Now we are less impressed with ourselves and more dependent on the hands of God that keep us in place.

As anyone who learned faith in front of a flannelgraph knows, the worst thing isn't to be a tattered and bruised by the story. The worst thing is not to be used.

Craig Barnes is pastor of Shadyside Presbyterian Church and professor of leadership and ministry at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary.

Ten things I didn't learn in seminary

by John Esau

1. Church members want pastors to succeed. Yes, there will always be resistance to change, and we pastors tend to fall into thinking that the church and its members are against us. But when we do, we are theologically and practically wrong. The church is our friend and our ally. It is in the church's self-interest for those of us in pastoral roles to do well.

2. Pastors are called to be priest and prophet with a little bit of king thrown in. We have no problem with the prophet side of this: most pastors want to be agents of change, spokespersons for God. We are ready to embrace the public ministry of teaching and preaching. But there are two other nonnegotiables to pastoral ministry: the priestly or the person-to-person ministry carried out in face-to-face relationships, and the kingly, the administrative ministry of caring for the church as a whole.

3. Pastoral ministry is a political vocation. This may not come as good news, but it is a reality with which we must come to terms. Pastoral survival depends upon the broad consensus and support of those whom we are serving. This doesn't mean doing what we think people want done, or saying what we think they want to hear and losing our own sense of authenticity and integrity in the process. But in my experience, any pastor who's done well has possessed some political smarts and good judgment.

4. Perception is more important than piety. Perception is the evidence of the truest form of spirituality, the ability to see and hear accurately. Piety is not the same thing, but we often have trouble understanding the difference. Accurate perception—about oneself, other people, reality in general, and about God—is the greatest key to functioning effectively in ministry.

5. Persons with significant personality disorders ought not to be in ministry. These are what the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Psychological Disorders* calls Axis II problems. In most respects persons with Axis II personality disorders do not appear to be ill, and that makes diagnosis difficult. Yet they are unable to perceive reality. They are often highly rational and logical, with an incredible ability to justify their own behavior. They will always claim that someone else is at fault if something goes wrong. This has been one of the most important learnings for me, but also one of the saddest because there is so little that can be done to change the destructive patterns.

6. Pastors probably won't be tried for heresy, but we may come close to crucifixion if we fail to respond pastorally to crises. Not to respond to a personal crisis in the congregation because it is one's day off or because it is "after hours" is inexcusable and will, I can assure you, become grounds for dismissal.

7. The office of ministry empowers us to do things we didn't know we could do. One of the reasons that I am so passionate about the importance of the pastoral office is that I learned how valuable it was in enabling me to function beyond my natural gifts—beyond myself. There is also grace in the church's office of ministry that it grants to us while we serve within it.

8. We pastors have to create our own support group; the church won't and can't do it for us. This is not to say we can't have friends in the church or that there don't need to be structures within the congregation to deal with important pastoral agendas. This is also not to say that the church as a whole can't minister to us, even as we minister to it. When good ministry happens, there is a mutuality experienced and shared. But when it comes to finding personal relationships that support, nourish and give us perspective on life and ministry, we must find them ourselves. No one owes us this. No one can do this for us.

9. There is no single personality type that makes an ideal minister. Myer's-Briggs and the Enneagram are not predictors of pastoral success or failure. I have observed congregations get the pastor they thought they wanted, only to discover too late that they got what they didn't want. I have also learned that there are a significant number of introverted pastors in what some have described as the extroverted job of ministry. What we introverts have had to do is to learn how to be temporary extroverts.

10. Ministry is good. In fact, I have come to believe that we ought to speak about the *gift* of ministry, not as something we give to the church but that the church gives us. It is a daunting task that requires our highest levels of competence and character. The margins for error have been greatly narrowed in ministry as in many other vocations. But in this opportunity to serve God through pastoral ministry we have been given a wonderful gift, one that is personally enriching and potentially fulfilling in the most ultimate manner—for the glory of God and the kingdom of our Lord and Christ.

As the apostle Paul said: "Since it is by God's mercy that we are engaged in this ministry, we do not lose heart" (2 Cor. 4:1). ■

John Esau is a retired pastor in North Newton, Kansas.

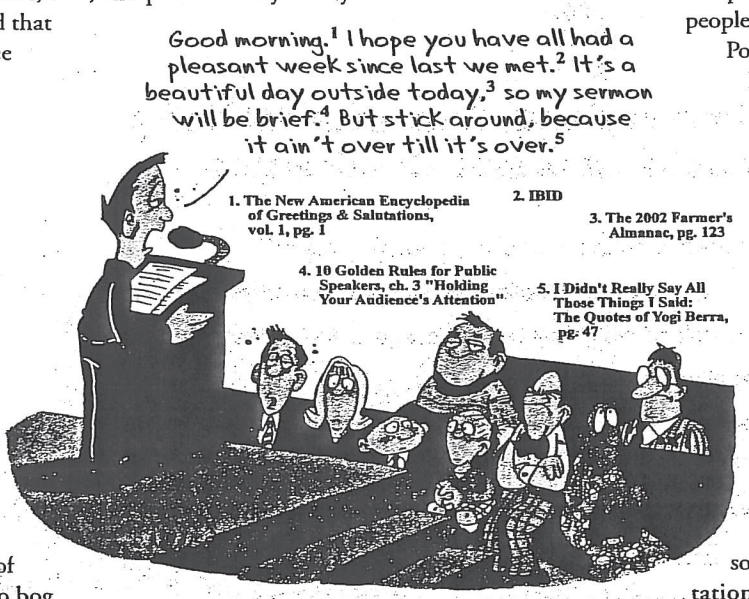
Footnotes in the Pulpit

by Chris Stinnett

How to credit your sources without putting people to sleep.

Now, what was that first book you mentioned? I read the other three, but I never heard of that one."

In a sermon, I mentioned four recent books in which university professors expressed some belief in the concept of intelligent design behind existing life. Now one of my friendly critics wanted information about the first. I knew he wasn't exaggerating about having read the other three. I was glad to be able to recite the author, title, and publication year. By the time you read this, he's read that book. And he's checked to see if my attribution was accurate and fair.



To provide arresting and relevant sermon illustrations demands that preachers read widely. When we use others' material in the pulpit, integrity demands that we give proper attribution. But how do we strike the proper balance between too much information and too little in a verbal footnote?

The trick is to give our hearers enough background so they can understand, accept, and recognize the importance of the quoted material, but not to bog down or distract from the truth we're trying to communicate.

From my experiences, both failures and occasional successes, I offer these suggestions:

1. Keep it short. If brevity is the soul of wit, it likewise is the heart of helpful attribution. If I give more than one or two sentences of reference, the audience gets lost before the quotation begins. Excessive attribution numbs the brain. By the time the pertinent line is delivered, my hearers are trying to guess how many of the details matter. Details are essential in written footnotes, but only clutter oral presentations. A name and professional credential will often be enough. Should a hearer request fuller citation, I can provide it. The important thing is that the quote is heard honestly and full force, unobscured by irrelevant facts.

2. Anticipate doubters' questions. If the hearers are likely to question the material, I include the source where I found the information and the date it was published.

Details help in this case. A vague "many experts believe" or "current studies show" as preface to a startling idea will generate skepticism among hearers. They assume that if many experts actually believed it, I'd be able to name one. Without attribution, this sounds like just another opinion. Remember, we preachers don't like it when someone brings us a bad report that begins, "A lot of people are saying ..."

3. Some things are better left unsaid. If my hearers are likely to have access to the source from which I quote, the writer's name and the source are usually sufficient: "In last Tuesday's newspaper, the columnist Thomas Sowell wrote ..." Skip the reference altogether if most people know the source. Quotes from Poor Richard's Almanac or Aesop's Fables shouldn't need attribution.

But make sure when you cite a source that you get it right. While preaching for a congregation in Michigan, I attributed a humorous line to the wrong man. One sister nailed me. "That was Dr. Will Kellogg, the cereal maker, who said that," she grinned. "He was from Battle Creek, you know, and quite famous long before your time." She hastened to add, "And mine, of course!"

Even accurate attribution can backfire, though, when the source is actually a source of irritation! I have learned to omit the footnote if the source of the material will generate negative emotion in the hearers. No matter what truths a mass murderer might have recognized, the feelings attached to his crime will cause many people to reject any idea associated with him. His quote will raise more questions than it answers.

Footnotes in sermons prove we've done our research. They lend credibility and power. They allow us to tap the best of expert opinion and the most brilliant wording of ideas. If I am forced to rely solely on my own ingenuity in weaving memorable tapestries of words, I cheat my hearers. In an oral presentation, a few well-chosen words of introduction can prepare our hearers for a quote that really drives home the point. And a little research can allow us to respond with the appropriate information when challenged at the door, "What was that first book you mentioned?"

Chris Stinnett (stinnettchris@hotmail.com) preaches for the Park and Seminole Church of Christ in Seminole, Oklahoma. Article adapted from Leadership *Journal, Fall 2002.*

ILLUSTRATION BY CHRIS MILLIS

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INTERNET PORNOGRAPHY AS AN EXPRESSION OF SEXUAL ADDICTION

-- by Lenora V. Brown, Ph.D., Director

Without a doubt the Internet has changed the manner in which the world communicates. It has made available a wealth of information and already impacts our lives in a number of positive ways. In this sense, the concept of a "global village" is indeed becoming reality.

Unfortunately, there is also a dark side to the Internet. The apparent anonymity can become a new "closet" in which restraints to objectionable behavior are removed. The sheer volume of information can invite obsessive involvement.

In these senses, the Internet represents a place of escape from sometimes-unpleasant reality. "Virtual" experiences substitute for that reality, temporarily altering unpleasant moods. "Virtual" relationships offer the thrill of connection without the problems of commitment. Only real others have needs to get in the way.

In its essence, therefore, the Internet is ripe to promote addiction. While researchers continue to debate the question as to the reality of Internet addiction, about 6 percent of Internet users classify themselves as compulsive users (Greenfield, 1998). Other studies place the number of compulsive users as high as 14 percent. Compulsive users of the Internet experience loss of control, time distortion, accelerated intimacy, and decreased inhibition. Whatever the verdict of the research community, clinically we cannot ignore the fact that these individuals clearly struggle with the more problematic aspects of the Internet.

Sexual forms of addiction are no exception; they find here a comfortable incubator. Although there is not unanimous agreement within the scientific community that sexual addiction is a diagnosable condition, there is considerable acceptance of and evidence for the concept in clinical literature. The National Council of Sexual Compulsivity estimates that between 6% and 8% of Americans can be described as sex addicts. The Council defines a sex addict as someone who engages in "persistent and escalating patterns of sexual behaviors acted out despite increasing negative consequences to self and others."

Clinical reports also document that the Internet is a dangerous tool for the person who struggles with sexual addiction. It provides a new and easy means of acting out sexual addiction. It is potentially addictive in itself; like television, the computer screen invites a kind of numbing, trance-like attention. For the sexual addict, the apparent secrecy and the emotional distance are also quite seductive. Inhibitions fall when it seems that no one is watching. Guilt is assuaged when the hurt to others is not obvious.

There is a sense of power, even invulnerability, when it is possible to achieve emotional/sexual intensity without any personal

risk. Sexual addiction on the Internet is based on the anonymous encounters with others in chat rooms or the even more "virtual" contact with pornographic images. In chat rooms or other interactive sites, the potential of the Internet for connecting others even at great distance gives way to the isolation of interactions with no referents in the physical or social world. The person on the other end of the electronic connection could have little relationship to the image that is being transmitted. It is an advanced form of the formal masquerade ball, with all the intrigue that image suggests.

The pornographic sites seem to be even more isolating. Here there are only images. The real persons behind the images are no longer available for any form of contact. At base, the person paying to visit such sites is interacting only with a collection of electronic impulses; everything else is solely in the mind of the observer. It is hard to imagine a more isolating, empty way of relating.

Understanding the On-line Sexual Addict

A recent article offers some empirical data about those who use the Internet for sexual gratification. Cooper, Putnam, Planchon, and Boies (2000) found that about half could be described as "recreational users." Slightly less than ten per cent were clearly sexual compulsives (sexual addicts), but the remainder could be described as "at-risk." That is, the remaining 45 per cent were persons who used this kind of anonymous sexual contact to self-medicate psychological distress, such as depressed mood, anxiety, or tension.

Typically, addiction is recognized most readily in its effects. "Recreational users" of sexual sites spent only about one hour per week accessing them, and experienced no internal or external indicators of distress or dysfunction. In contrast, those identified as sexually compulsive spent more than ten hours per week in sexual acting out, and experienced internal distress about this activity. Additionally, this group of compulsive on-line users was more likely to have experienced some other compulsive and secretive aspect of their sexuality (e.g., use of pornography, excessive masturbation, exhibitionism, or voyeurism).

This report and our clinical experience suggest that the issue of sexual addiction "on-line" only partly overlaps with the broader moral issues regarding pornography on the Internet. As with any other addiction, resolution of sexual addiction is not only a matter of recognizing the wrong and resolving to change. Apologies, excuses, and promises come all to easily to the addict (or "at risk" person) who has been found out. Dealing effectively with sexual addiction requires extensive psychological therapy and spiritual work in its own right.

A Common Scenario

An hypothetical case illustrates the concepts more clearly. While there are many forms of sexual addiction, and many paths by which it progresses, the general picture is the same.

A priest often overworks. Results are elusive. The "hungry ghost" demands more and more. A sense of not being appreciated may emerge. Regrets over forsaken options may take root. The demands of ministerial service slowly but surely erode mutuality with others. Even intimacy with God and self is lost. There is a sense of being drained rather than filled.

An answer is needed. A "quick fix" seems to suffice. The need is real enough, but the choice of the remedy is poor. The Internet seems to offer a "fix" with few complications. After all, it does not hurt anyone. Its apparent anonymity offers also a measure of safety. Even "cruising" on the streets carries the risk of chance exposure, disease, or violence. Even anonymous sex requires seeing and feeling a real person in a physical body, occasions for guilt. Internet sex is less costly than sex by phone.

Chat rooms offer the illusion of real relationship. They may be the only locations in which he can discuss openly his sexual desires. Pornographic sites offer complete control in "virtual" interaction with beautiful others.

In the beginning, the forays onto the Internet may be minimized as "just curiosity." They may be rationalized as the responsibility to check out the dangers facing "our youth." It may be that the individual "just responded" to an ad on the e-mail. But the increasing frequency and longer duration of visits, the increasing risks born by the man, and the increasingly explicit sites accessed belie the excuses to the discerning ear. The tempo-

rary easing of loneliness, tension or fatigue is just enough to reinforce the behavior. Given this beachhead, the invasion is underway.

Shame follows, to be sure. But it is just enough to assuage the guilt. Resolutions not to return are easy to make, but they are broken just as easily when the pain increases again. This is the definition of the shame cycle that only perpetuates the addiction. Inevitably, it leads to further personal and professional degradation. Secrecy seals the behavior in a kind of hermetic vacuum. It seems possible to live this dual life. The lack of integrity splits the soul. It leads to deterioration in the quality of every aspect of real relationship—spiritual, social, and intrapersonal.

Eventually, something gives him away. Sometimes, unconsciously seeking freedom from this trap, the man himself is the betrayer of the secret. Only then do the consequences for self and church begin to be clear.

What Can I Do if I am Struggling with Internet Pornography?

When one finds oneself in the midst of the shame cycle of sexual addiction, it is no easy matter to get free of it. Even when exposed, the instinctive response is to minimize, rationalize, and otherwise excuse or explain away the behavior. Self-protection seems to demand this course.

The internal battle may be fierce. Various voices may rage within. On the other hand, the internal state may be quite one-sided. Perhaps only a small voice cries out for freedom and a return to integrity. In either case, a part of the self wants to protect the status quo, to deny that there is a problem, while another voice cries for help to stop the destructive pattern.

If the individual is fortunate enough to begin to consider change before being discovered by others, the process of change may begin in small ways. Small steps can make clear the compulsive nature of the activity. We suggest keeping a record of visits to sexual sites, noting the emotional state and time of day that such visits occur, and recording the length of time spent. The decision to masturbate should also be made conscious by writing down the reasons for that decision and the thoughts and feelings that follow the act.

Making such observations "goes against" the natural tendency to secrecy and internal obfuscation of reasoning and decision-making. It will make clear the real nature of the practice. On the other hand, inability to keep such a log in itself gives evidence of the irrational but powerful hold the addiction already has. Nothing is allowed to stand it its way.

When convinced that there may be a problem, the next step is to speak of it to a trusted other. A friend who is sufficiently strong not to become an apologist for the addiction can give honest feedback in a supportive context. If shame leads to disclosure and determination to change, it is converted from a problem (the shame cycle) to a force for good.

If the invitation to change comes in the form of an "intervention," the process will be more painful. Embarrassment is often acute on the part of all involved. The kindest response of those responsible for bringing the individual to light is firmness and resoluteness of purpose. It is important not to accept the easy answers that will be forthcoming.

This advice is not so easy to follow in practice. There is naturally a strong wish to see all made well quickly. We have witnessed cases of well-meaning companions encouraging the addict in the delusion that he can pray his way out of the problem.

How common it is to find all involved unconsciously colluding in the denial. We know the problem from our common experience with sexual offenses against other persons. Historically, there were many unfortunate decisions to accept the excuses and promises of the perpetrator, allowing him to return to ministry with no or minimal treatment. Whereas policies have been established to prevent such collusion in cases involving sexual boundary violations with other persons, often no such policies apply in the case of Internet sexual addiction.

Treating the Sexually Addicted On-Line User

When seeking professional treatment for any sexual addiction, including those addicted to Internet pornography and/or engaging in on-line sexual behavior, assessing the severity of the problem and its impact on the person's functioning should be the first priority. Honest and complete sharing of the story, though difficult, is paramount. This kind of disclosure is often done in the course of an intensive

psychological and spiritual assessment process.

Treatment must include a commitment not to return to the problematic sites. However, in the case of Internet addiction, this boundary is quite difficult to keep. The Internet is simply too accessible. There is software available that will block entrance to many such sites. If the software is set to trigger the attention of another person when entrance has been blocked, the accountability is that much greater.

Unfortunately, no system is perfect. Ultimately, the individual must have a radical commitment to honest reporting of any visits, the conditions under which the decision was made, and the consequences. Making conscious the behavior and bringing it to light in appropriate relationships is the key.

A "relapse prevention" plan is very helpful. The name is not entirely appropriate, in that the plan is started while the individual is still intermittently acting out. However, we have found that if the development of this plan is seen as an on-going process, it helps the addicted individual identify high-risk situations. Working on the relapse prevention plan may help the individual realize, for example, that a computer in the bedroom represents an irresistible temptation. Certain times of day or certain kinds of days may so reliably lead to acting out that it pays to call for help even before trouble arises. The plan also leads to the identification of effective coping resources--personal supports and people one can never seem to think of spontaneously when in the throes of the addictive attraction. The elaboration of the plan is a continuous, evolving process.

In the same way, the addict needs continuously available support, going beyond what is usually available in professional relationships. For that reason, we recommend intensive involvement in one of the "S" groups of the Twelve Step tradition. In any given geographical area, one or another of these traditions will be more available or more reliable. For example, in the St. Louis metropolitan area Sexaholics Anonymous and Sexual Compulsives Anonymous are very strong. These groups, when attended regularly, offer accountability, support in keeping one's "bottom line," and individual companioning through the Steps. They are a valuable part of any program of recovery.

Treatment approaches vary but we have found cognitive-behavioral therapy to be an effective and flexible method. It is used in a manner similar to those employed with alcohol or drug addiction. Cognitive-behavioral strategies may be used in the whole range of intervention points. They help systematize efforts to reduce the likelihood of acting out. They can be used to manage or prevent dysfunctional affective states that increase the likelihood of acting out or to modify the patterns of thought or action that produce the affective states. Cognitive therapy also opens up the early life experience that produced habitual ways of perceiving, interpreting and responding that lie much deeper in the individual and provide the context for all of the above.

In all of this, the spiritual life is the central point. The addict has in essence placed some object above God in the mistaken belief that it can give him what he wants. It is not that what he wants, most authentically and deeply, is wrong—quite the contrary. It is rather that the addict has come to believe that he cannot have what he wants except in surreptitious ways. God cannot be trusted to deliver, so the addict seeks to take matters in his own hands or to place his trust elsewhere. In the case of the on-line sex addict, the illusion is that sex will meet the desire for intimacy and the further distortion is that meaningful sexual contact can be had in this "virtual" reality.

In this state, it is no surprise that most addicts have lost the rhythm and affective quality of prayer. No real relationship can compare with the thrill of "virtual" relationships that offer so much control and apparent protection from hurt. The way back, to find meaning again in the mutual relationship with a God who is both Other and Self, who is and gives freedom, requires perseverance and support. Along this path, however, there is the love that was the desire behind the drive in the first place.

What we have described is the road back that we have found to be most effective for the long-term. So much of our current technical culture emphasizes fixing symptoms. Our experience tells us that "band-aids" will not suffice in the case of sexual addiction, on-line or otherwise. It does not matter whether that band-aid is medical, spiritual, or psychological.

A commitment of time, away from the typical pattern of life in which the addiction took hold, is often required. This is a bitter pill for most addicts, who want to manage the situation with no exposure or disruption. It is a pill that must be swallowed.

On the other hand, exploration of these issues is then best done in a reassuring and supportive environment. The old admonition to "say hard things softly" applies here as it does in every addiction. Only in a holistic (emotional, behavioral and spiritual) approach can the individual and those who care for him hope for the integration of all aspects of the person and the healing that such integration entails.

Annotated Bibliography

1. DeAngelis, T (2000). Is Internet addiction real? Monitor on Psychology, April, 2000, 24-26.

In this journalistic article, the writer reports on research that explores the ways in which the Internet is used unhealthily. Two sidebars illustrate the clinical situation. This magazine, published for members of the American Psychological Association, may not be easily accessible in libraries. Copies of the article are available on request from the Editor.

2. Cooper, A, Putnam, DE, Planchon, LA, and Boies, SC (1999). Online Sexual Compulsivity: Getting Tangled in the Net. Sexual Addiction & Compulsivity, 6 (2), 79-104.

The authors propose that there is a continuum of severity that corresponds to the various ways that individuals use sexual sites on the Internet. They propose several common categories: recreational, sexual compulsive, at-risk depressive, and at-risk stress reactive. They go on to propose methods for assessing and treating the different types of users and suggest the kind of research that would provide more answers in the future. On page 95 is a list of online resources for persons seeking recovery from sexual addiction.

3. Cooper, A, Delmonico, DL, and Burg R (2000). Cybersex Users, Abusers, and Compulsives: New Findings and Implications. Sexual Addiction & Compulsivity, 7 (1-2), 5-29.

In this article, the authors carry forward the analysis of those who use sexual sites on the Internet. They employed a sexual compulsivity scale to divide the sample according to degree of compulsivity in use of the Internet sites. Seventeen per cent of the users scored in the problematic range. The resulting groups also varied on descriptive characteristics such as gender, sexual orientation, relationship status, and occupation. The groups also differed in the ways they used these Internet sites.

4. Orzack, MH, and Ross, CJ (2000). Should Virtual Sex be Treated Like Other Addictions? Sexual Addiction and Compulsivity, 7 (1-2), 113-125.

The authors suggest that most persons who seek treatment for online sexual addiction present with other behavioral and/or chemical addictions as well. They offer case studies to illustrate the most common types of clients in their experience. They offer guidelines for effective treatment of those addicted to "virtual sex." In some cases limits with group support will suffice. In others, the authors find, a period of complete abstinence is required, perhaps including even computer use of any kind.

5. Putnam, DE and Maheu, MM (2000). Online Sexual Addiction and Compulsivity: Integrating Web Resources and Behavioral Telehealth in Treatment. Sexual Addiction & Compulsivity, 7 (1-2), 91-112.

In this article the authors discuss how factors associated with use of the Internet may initiate and maintain sexually compulsive behavior online. They suggest ways to make use of web resources in treating such problems, analogous to the old psychoanalytic concept of "going with the resistance." There are many ethical issues yet to be worked out in using the Internet to assist in the practice of psychotherapy.

6. Carnes, PJ (1991). Don't Call it Love: Recovery from Sexual Addiction. New York: Bantam Books.

This book remains one of the classics in the area of sexual addiction. It remains one of the best books for clients seeking to learn about sexual addiction and assess for themselves the nature and extent of their problem. It is often suggested reading in the early stages of treatment.

F

Leading Through Change

By Kathy Smith

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When it comes to change, too many of us in the church are pessimists. Instead of looking forward to new things with excitement and interest, we dread them and say, "Change and decay in all around I see." In some places we welcome change—like the doctor's office. We want our physician to be up on the latest diagnoses and treatments. But in the church we often fear change.

Why is that? Is it because we face change in so much of life that we at least want the comfort of sameness in church? Is it because in most areas of life we have to accept and adapt to changes beyond our choosing, but in church we feel we can control some of it? Is it because matters of faith are tied so closely to what we do in church that changing seems like questioning our beliefs? Is that why we often would rather abide with the "God who changes not" and transfer that concept to his church as well?

All Churches Change

Of course, the reality is that things do change—even in the church—whether we like it or not. And they must! The church is a living organism—the living body of Christ—and living things are constantly growing, changing, and adapting to new realities. Just as our physical bodies change, so does the body of Christ. People are born, grow up and die. Each new generation of young people experiences church differently, and this brings changes in attitudes and values. Some churches also face changes in their environment, such as influxes of immigrants, developing or deteriorating neighborhoods, businesses encroaching on church property, or changes within the church, such as building or staff additions.

The important thing to realize is that all churches go through changes. We all can identify small or large changes in our churches in the past 5 years. And changes, whether viewed positively or negatively, will bring some resistance, a normal and natural reaction to change. Wise church leaders know this, expect it, and think carefully about how to learn from it and work through it.

Using Adaptive Leadership

Wise church leaders guide their congregations through the process of change using a model of leadership some call ***adaptive leadership***. The key to understanding and implementing this style of leadership is in understanding what is meant by ***adaptive***. It does not mean the congregation must automatically adapt to the changing circumstances it faces. It also does not mean that the leader must adapt to whatever the congregation wants, or at least what its loudest voices want. It means that the leader must help the congregation to see the disconnect between what it is and what it ought to be, and then learn and adapt accordingly, in ways that honor its values and history. For example, a congregation that understands God's call to be a caring, accepting fellowship but is dominated by cliques faces an ***adaptive*** challenge—adapting *from* what we are *to* what we say we want to be.

I can't think of a better way to express this than to quote from Rev. Rick Williams' lecture at Calvin Theological Seminary on April 11, 2002, entitled "A Glimpse of Pastoral Leadership in a Multi-Racial Church." When asked about leadership style, Rick answered,

> "I know of a number of pastors who articulate for the congregation where the church ought to be going, and their challenge is to bring them along. I'm not that kind of a leader. My strength is to bring people together and say 'OK, this is what I think we should be thinking about; and now let's talk about it and pray about it.' I'm always amazed by two things that happen then—how much better the ideas are that they come up with together and how much more responsibility they take for advancing it. I see my responsibility as being a catalyst and making sure we are asking the right questions and facilitating the discussion."

One could easily misunderstand this approach to leadership as being too weak, little more than a congregational opinion poll taker. But such is not the case. Being committed to good congregational process

doesn't mean that leaders don't have strong convictions. Effective leaders have biblically shaped convictions regarding the church Christ is building, a church that is called to be engaging in its worship, faithful in its teaching, strong and deep in its fellowship, and self-sacrificial in its outreach and service. These biblical convictions rightly propel leaders and the community they lead in a certain direction. Notice, Rick sees his job as "asking the right questions."

Helping Congregations Clarify Values and Vision

This requires strong leadership, but not the kind of strength that decides for the congregation and says "Follow me; I have all the answers." Rather, the strength of this leadership model is helping the congregation address important issues itself. Adaptive leaders don't first of all cast their own visions; they help congregations to develop their vision and values. They lead not first of all by saying, "Follow me!" but by asking, "Who are we?" For instance, instead of saying, "We need to be a more outreaching church," the adaptive leader asks, "What do we believe about being an outreaching church—from Scripture, and from our confessions? Now, how do we measure up with what ***we*** believe? And what are ***we*** going to do about it?" The adaptive leader helps people clarify the conflict between *their own* values and current reality and creates the conditions for the congregation to work through a process of adaptation.

We are at a time in the CRC when many churches suffer from one of two extremes—the heroic leader who thinks the leader's vision is everything, and the passive pastor who merely seeks to keep everyone happy. The adaptive leadership model offers a way of leading that both meaningfully engages the congregation in developing its values and vision and keeps the leader responsible to give strong direction in the process. The goal of good Christian leadership is to be faithful to biblical principles and discern what is best for a congregation as it sorts out God's will in this place and time. CRC pastors and church leaders are encouraged to use adaptive leadership as they lead their congregations, following the God who certainly does abide with us, and who always our "guide and strength can be."

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Recommended Resources on Leadership

The books by Ronald Heifetz and Gilbert Rendle especially deal with the adaptive leadership model.

Joseph L. Badaracco, Jr., *Leading Quietly: An Unorthodox Guide to Doing the Right Thing*, (Harvard Business School Press, 2002)

Ronald Heifetz, *Leadership Without Easy Answers,* (Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1994)

Ronald Heifetz and Marty Linsky, *Leadership on the Line: Staying Alive Through the Dangers of Leading*, (Harvard Business School Press, 2002)

Gilbert Rendle, *Leading Change in the Congregation: Spiritual and Organizational Tools for Leaders*, (Alban Institute, 1998)

Gilbert Rendle, *The Multigenerational Congregation: Meeting the Leadership Challenge,* (Alban Institute, 2002)

Peter Steinke, *Healthy Congregations: A Systems Approach*, (Alban Institute, 1996)

Peter Steinke, *How Your Church Family Works: Understanding Congregations as Emotional Systems*, (Alban Institute, 1993)

R. Paul Stevens and Phil Collins, *The Equipping Pastor: A Systems Approach to Congregational Leadership,* (Alban Institute, 1993)

William H. Willimon, *Pastor: The Theology and Practice of Ordained Ministry*, (Abingdon Press, 2002) Especially Chapter 11: "The Pastor as Leader: The Peculiarity of Christian Leadership"

G

Emotional Intelligence and Leadership

STEPHEN OTT

Why do so many cognitively intelligent pastors and other leaders flounder, while many of lesser intelligence enjoy success? The widespread push for achievement in the 20th century often asserted the basic importance of cognitive intelligence, yet we see that people with high IQs are not always successful in relating to spouse, parents, or offspring; dealing with people at work; or living well and happily in a demanding world.

The concept of intelligence was scarcely mentioned in psychology books until the late 1920s. An early researcher in the field, David Wechsler, wrote in 1940 about the nonintellective factors in general intelligence. Although he went on to concentrate on the cognitive branch of intelligence research, he recognized the importance of noncognitive aspects of general human intelligence. Howard Gardner in 1983 expanded Wechsler's concept of general intelligence and wrote of "multiple intelligences," and specifically of "personal intelligence."

The exploration of personal intelligence—involving self-awareness and interpersonal and emotional competence—represents another direction and branch of psychological research. It is from this lineage that Reuven Bar-On (who coined the phrase Emotional Quotient [EQ]), Daniel Goleman, and others write, examining successful functioning in the workplace and in interpersonal situations, clarifying how applications of EQ lead to excellence in performance. They have explained why some people are able to exercise emotional competencies to make a profound positive difference in their work and in their organizations, while without it others stumble.

Traits and Competencies

Bar-On defines emotional intelligence as "an array of non-cognitive abilities, capabilities, and skills that influence one's ability to succeed in coping with environmental demands and pressures" (paper presented to the American Psychological Association annual meeting in Chicago in 1997). It is commonly agreed that emotional skills and intelligence develop over time. They modify and can grow throughout life, tending to peak in one's 40s; they can be taught through skills training and therapy experiences. It is important to distinguish between an inborn *trait*, like perfect pitch or a sharp sense of taste or an aesthetic sensibility, and a *competence* like that of a composer, a chef, or a painter. The competencies build on existing traits, but are the result of focused training, learning about applications, and practical experience. Competence is a valuable set of skills and habits that lead to more effective performance, and to a greater likelihood of success.

Learning Emotional Competence

According to Goleman, some research indicates that emotional competence matters *twice* as much as raw intelligence or technical know-how in contributing to outstanding performance in work (*Fortune*, Oct. 26, 1998, p. 293–298). Strong technical knowledge and intellectual ability, coupled with high emotional intelligence, are thought to characterize a person well along in the process of self-actualization. Scoring high in emotional intelligence does not automatically make a person superb at work or in relating to people; it means he or she has a high *potential* to learn the emotional competencies needed for outstanding performance. In a subsequent article, Goleman indicates that emotional intelligence has a genetic-nature component, along with the nurture-learning that accumulates with age and experience. How much of each is a factor is not known, but research demonstrates that while each individual has different capacities for growth and adaptation, emotional intelligence can be learned (*Harvard Business Review*, Nov.-Dec. 1998, p. 93–102).

Research indicates that the thinking part of the brain learns differently from the emotional part. The centers for rational thought are located in the neocortex, the thin layer that covers the top of the brain. It learns by adding new information to the existing networks of association and understanding, thus expanding them, depending to a high degree on sensory input in visual and aural form. But learning an emotional competence engages our emotional circuitry, involving our social habits and emotional memories. These are located in the limbic structures, deep in the middle of the brain, with the amygdala playing a key role. It is the site where emotions and affective memories are stored. Neural circuitry runs from the limbic system to the gut, giving new meaning to the term "having a gut feeling." Learning emotional competence involves a process different from that of learning multiplication tables. The limbic system learns by repetition, experimentation, and practice, all of which involve emotion. It takes a limbic connection to change an emotional skill.

Going to a lecture or a typical training program on interpersonal competence isn't likely to get the job done, for people won't automatically know how to apply and practice emotionally what they have heard, and the lessons have been aimed at the wrong part of the brain. Many of us have gone to workshops and brought home great materials in notebooks that were never looked at again. EQ isn't about information; it is about taking information and combining it with motivation, self-awareness, and vision, and striving for a new application, a new way of living. Emotional learning involves growing new pathways at the neurological level, not just adding more input to the existing (status quo) web. New ways of living, responding, and understanding oneself involve creating new circuits and replacing older, less adaptive ones.

EQ and Leadership

Emotional competence is crucial to the leadership role. Leadership is closely linked to helping others accomplish their tasks efficiently and to building confidence, satisfaction, and productivity among employees or volunteers. Problematic leadership lowers the morale and productivity of the work group and has a negative impact on individuals in the group: it blurs the focus on accomplishing tasks, raises frustration and hostility levels, decreases group cohesion and cooperation, and contributes to lowered motivation and loyalty to the organization. The effects of chronic distress on individuals in such environments may include increased distractedness and a permanent dulling effect on intellectual functioning.

Unskillful leadership also contributes to lowered retention rates of valuable workers or volunteers, and to a loss of customers and thus lower profits. Reuven Bar-On suggests that EQ is emotional and social intelligence, concerned with the ability to understand oneself and others, to relate effectively to people, and to adapt to and cope with one's immediate situation—in the process increasing one's ability to deal successfully with environmental demands. Leadership based on these self-aware abilities and skills uses active self-management and empathy, aiming at relational management, which in turn can catalyze needed cooperation and resonance in organizations. "Resonance," in organizational terms, is the joining together of people in a vital common mission and in cooperative anticipation of their shared future.

The Making of Visionary Leaders

Visionary, innovative leadership is built spiritually on a sense of vocational calling in one who exercises self-awareness and congruence with one's deepest motivating values. Such leadership is both cognitive and emotional in its wisdom; it is based on core motivating values. A new idea or insight needs people of emotional competence to refine it, initiate it, and put it into effective practice and follow-through. People can lose their calling by just doing the same thing over and over, failing to hear changes in their dreams and values as they move through cycles of life and vocation. Awakening to one's spiritual values and one's source of hope and renewal are of paramount importance to becoming a visionary leader whose skills and character join hands. It is an example of emotional intelligence vocationally focused.

Many denominations today are aware that a significant proportion of their churches have plateaued or are losing members, a complex political, social, and religious trend measurable for more than 40 years. More than half the congregations of the American Baptist Churches are in this situation. Identity and ministry are being challenged by a more secular society whose new generations show a decreasing interest in denominational life. Fewer church leaders now have the confidence that they know how to lead congregations effectively in mission and servanthood during such a time of change.

> Pastorally *managing* an organization that has been stable and orderly in the past, and has avoided the chaos of drastic change is a job far different from *leading* an organization, which involves working with the volatile changes and shifts of the present.

Pastorally *managing* an organization that has been stable and orderly in the past, and has avoided the chaos of drastic change is a job far different from *leading* an organization, which involves working with the volatile changes and shifts of the present. Leading sometimes requires inoculation of the organization's system to increase a sense of urgency to address needed change, as well as an ability to remain steadfast in the face of the resulting conflict and stress. Average EQ skills are unlikely to be sufficient to transform a "stuck" congregational system, which may resist the change it needs.

Training for Renewal Ministry

Among American Baptists in the northeast there is a new program built upon the anticipation ("prolepsis") of God's calling the church into renewal and vitality for the future. The Nehemiah Leadership Network (NLN) is a cooperative program of 10 American Baptist regions that nurtures and encourages visionary pastors who choose to lead congregations in renewal. The program identifies candidates with a high potential for success with renewal ministry, and helps them to develop the spiritual vitality, emotional maturity (EQ), and leadership skills needed for leading congregations in renewal. Such pastors attend a vocational evaluation program at the Center for Career Development and Ministry in Dedham, Massachusetts, aimed at measuring the extent to which the pastor has the leadership traits and skills for revitalization work. The center and the pastor devise an individual plan for learning, strengthening and deepening the integration of the pastor's emotional intelligence, leadership training, and spiritual grounding in a transformation ministry.

As the meltdown of old denominational forms continues, and the importance of teamwork, cooperation, and collegiality increases, the need for superb people skills grows in ministry leadership. Learner-directed, the NLN is one form of church renewal, providing an appropriate environment for the experimental, repetitive learning required for focusing on emotional growth and self-actualization (EQ). These experiences are combined with systems knowledge and change theory, interdependence and mutual learning in a small group, and a vital personal spiritual practice. ◆

More on Emotional Competence